

IS THE BELIEVER'S SOUL PERMANENTLY OR  
PROGRESSIVELY SAVED?

---

A Paper

Presented to



Grace Research Room

---

by  
Josh Manning  
April 2026

## Introduction

In his seminal work on *Free Grace Soteriology*, Dr. David Anderson describes the extent to which original sin wreaked havoc on the entire human-being when he writes, “When Adam sinned, all aspects of his humanity were corrupted. His body became mortal. His spirit was separated from God (spiritual death), and every part of his *psyche* was corrupted: his mind was darkened, his emotions were degraded, and his will was defective.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, in regard to the human *psyche* or soul, man is completely unable, on his own, to restore God’s design for intimate fellowship with the individual human being. This restoration can only come through God’s supernatural provision. If the human soul was not fully erased, but was sufficiently defaced through Adam’s sin, what impact does spiritual salvation have upon the believer’s *psyche*? Is God’s saving work within the soul of the Christian positional or progressive in nature? Ultimately, for the believer, what is the soul’s essential role within the entire package of salvation? Understanding the answers to these questions is critical to effectively grasp the significance of the believer’s soul in the sanctification process.

The purpose of this research paper will be to analyze, assess and clarify the often-misunderstood theological issue of the progressive nature and impact of salvation upon the human *psyche*, and how the Christian life must then be lived — both spiritually and experientially. This will be accomplished by focusing on two interrelated topics concerning the soul of the regenerate individual: 1) the essence of the soul in relation to the human being, and 2) the positional sanctification of the human spirit and the progressive impact of salvation upon the human soul.

---

<sup>1</sup> David R. Anderson, *Free Grace Soteriology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (N.p.: Grace Theology Press, 2018), 34.

## The Nature of the Human Soul

### The Tripartite Human: His Person and Personality

At the outset of this study, it is incumbent on the researcher to clearly understand the meaning of the *psyche* in light of its New Testament settings. Many false assumptions and thus the ensuing theological confusions, have frequently shrouded a biblically accurate understanding of the human soul. Therefore, it is of primary importance that the semantic domain of the Greek word, *psyche*, be highlighted at this juncture in the research. In his master's thesis, Jerry Patillo makes the convincing argument that, out of the 103 times this word occurs<sup>2</sup>, there are four major usages of *psyche* within the New Testament. These include the literal, physical life of the individual (Matthew 2:20; 20:28; Mark 3:4; 10:45; Luke 6:9), individual persons (Acts 2:43; 3:23; 7:14; 27:37; 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 2:14), an individual's time spent on this earth (Matthew 16:24-26; Mark 8:35-37; Luke 9:24-25; Matthew 10:39, Luke 17:33; John 12:25), and the inner self of the individual person (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49; I Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12).<sup>3</sup> It is the last two usages of *psyche* with which this research paper is specifically concerned.

According to the Apostle Paul, the timeless truth found in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (in which *psyche* refers to the inner self of the person) becomes a theological under-pinning for the tripartite human nature, with its distinctly triune essence and interaction of body, soul and spirit

---

<sup>2</sup> F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 219.

<sup>3</sup> Jerry Patillo, "An Exegetical Study of the Lord's Logion on the Salvation of the Psyche," Master's thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1978, <https://faithalone.org/journal-articles/an-exegetical-study-of-the-lords-logion-on-the-salvation-of-the-psyche/> (accessed September 24, 2021), 7-8.

— “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.” Understanding the human nature to be a trichotomy (body, soul and spirit) rather than a dichotomy (body, soul/spirit) is an essential step in theologically understanding the journey of progressive salvation. The human soul and spirit work distinctly, and yet in complete unison, as the subsequent research will demonstrate. Concerning the theological implications of trichotomy upon the specific field of soteriology, C. Gordon Olson aptly states:

The trichotomist understands the human spirit as the God-consciousness part of unfallen man, while the soul is the self-conscious part. In the fall, it was the human spirit which was most affected...Dichotomists have to take spiritual death as a figure of speech, since they do not distinguish soul and spirit. Obviously, the soul/spirit did not die, or man would have become less than an animal. Trichotomists argue that the human spirit, the God-conscious part of man, literally died...On this basis, the trichotomist understands the new birth to be a literal resurrection or making alive of the deadened human spirit.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the questions must be asked, “What then is the distinctive role played by the human soul throughout the sanctification process? What is the unique relationship shared between the believer’s soul and spirit?” The answer to these questions will prove essential for accurately interpreting and relevantly applying the *psyche*’s rightful place within the believer’s experiential sanctification process.

---

<sup>4</sup> C. Gordon Olson, *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism: An Inductive, Mediate Theology of Salvation* (N.p.: Global Gospel Publishers, 2002), 87.

Not only does the human *psyche* share in the triune essence of the human nature (body, soul and spirit), but the human soul, itself, is a triune expression of the Godhead through the human personality (mind, will and emotion)<sup>5</sup>. Commenting on the *psyche*'s function within the tripartite human personality and the presence of the *imago Dei* (image of God) within every human being, Dr. David Anderson concurs with this observation by pointing out that the human soul is a unique combination of mind (Philippians 1:27), emotions (Mark 14:34), and will (Revelation 21:17).<sup>6</sup> Thus, he concludes, "In the original creation, Adam and Eve were one with the Lord, had immortal physical bodies, and had the undiminished capacity to enjoy His love, interact with His thoughts, and obey His will. But the Fall affected all aspects of man."<sup>7</sup> It is also very important to note that the tripartite nature of both the human person and personality requires that the human soul retain a very distinct role and responsibility from the human spirit, in particular. Concerning the uniqueness of the *psyche* in comparison to the other elements of the human make-up, T. Austin-Sparks gives a very insightful perspective on the unique characteristics of the human *psyche*, when he states:

...the soul (often translated "life") relates to man in his own conscious life here in this world; his good or evil; his power to do, to achieve, to enjoy, to profit, to know and acquire what is of this world, and to live as a responsible, self-conscious being, answering to God for himself and his life, and so taking account of his life as to include the reality of a Divinely intended higher destiny and intention than just to live to himself

---

<sup>5</sup>William Charlton, "The Trinity and the Tripartite Soul," *New Blackfriars* 78, no. 915 (May 1997): 238, accessed September 23, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43249995>.

<sup>6</sup> David R. Anderson, *Free Grace Soteriology*, 33.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

and for the brief span of this life. The soul can be affected by and responsible to something higher, but its immediate relationship is not with God. Such a relationship is indirect and secondary.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, it should be evident, that the human soul was uniquely created by God to function as a necessary part of the person and personality of humankind. The presence of the *psyche* is of great significance to this research because it is at the very core of who God originally called and created humanity to be. However, one must ask, “What is the specific impact of sin on the human *psyche*? And to what degree, then, is it even possible for the human soul to be rescued from this plight of sin and death, if at all?”

### **The Sinful Soul: Defaced but not Erased**

In the second and third chapters of First Corinthians, the apostle Paul writes to the Corinthian church about these very questions concerning sin’s impact on the human *psyche*. Paul states in 2:14, “But the natural 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.” Within the immediate context of this pericope (2:6-3:4), Paul’s meaning concerning “the things of the Spirit of God” in verse 14, is defined as “the wisdom of God in a mystery”(verse 7a), “the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory”(verse 7b) and “the things that God has prepared for those who love Him”(verse 9c). Thus, according to Paul, the specific truth he is expounding on is exclusively revealed by the Holy Spirit to the spiritual man but is considered

---

<sup>8</sup> T. Austin-Sparks, *What is Man?* Reprint ed. (N.p.: Witness and Testimony Publishers, 1939), 17-18.

foolishness to the natural man. Such revealed truth is characterized as “the deep things of God” (2:10c) by the apostle. Within the immediate context, this deep truth is nothing less than the progressive revelation concerning the spiritual Body of Christ — the universal Church and all the riches given to her freely by His grace (2:12). However, Paul affirms that the natural man is judged as unable and unworthy to assess and understand such spiritual propositions; he is unable to evaluate these Spirit-revealed things – they are spiritually discerned (verse 14). This observation is pertinent for understanding the impact of humanity’s sin upon the human soul. The English phrase, natural man, is actually the translation of one word in Koine Greek. This word is *psychikos*.<sup>9</sup> The late C. Gordon Olson points out the distinctive usage of *psychikos* in 1 Corinthians 2:14, when he writes:

In speaking of the process of revelation in vv. 10-13, he compares the role of the Holy Spirit in searching God’s mind to the human spirit, which searches man’s mind. This implies a correspondence between the two in the revelation process. Then in 2:14 he describes the unregenerate man as a soulish (*psuchikos*) man. Man is merely soulish, not only devoid of the Spirit of God, but deficient in the correspondence realm of the human spirit as well.<sup>10</sup>

It is insightful to note that *psychikos* is the adjectival form of the root word, *psyche*, upon which this research is focused. As a result, this Greek concept clearly highlights the depraved nature of the human soul, under the influence of sin’s power. However, the question must then be asked due to the human soul’s natural subjection to sin’s dominance, “Does this not also mean that the

---

<sup>9</sup> F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 220.

<sup>10</sup> C. Gordon Olson, *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism*, 455.

soul's essence has been completely erased because of sin's corruption?" Dr. Anderson confronts this false interpretive assumption effectively when he opines:

It is interesting that this passage (1Cor 2:10-3:4) describes three types of men, each characterized by a different aspect of the tripartite man: body, soul and spirit. The man controlled by his flesh is described in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3. Such men are called *sarkikoi*, fleshly or carnal. They are said to be unable (*oude eti nun dunatai*) to receive the meat of the things of God. The term used here for their ability or lack thereof (*ou dunatai*) is the same word used of the *psuchikos* man in 2:14. It is said of this so-called "natural" man that he cannot know (*gnonai* is usually understood to be "experiential" knowledge as opposed to intuitive knowledge) the things of the Spirit of God because he is unregenerate, that is, because he does not have the Spirit. But if that argument holds up for the "natural" man, the same should be said of the carnal man in 3:1-3.<sup>11</sup>

In relation to God's illuminating work, the personal experience of the carnal Christian and the unbeliever is practically the same, though it is different ontologically. Based on the biblical validation of this claim, there is no contradiction. The *psyche* can be totally incapable of applying God's revelation on its own, and yet, still be completely responsible for accepting the simple truth of the gospel message through the convicting work of the Spirit. In the end, even the believer's natural life or *psyche* left to itself cannot receive what God desires to reveal to His children. Therefore, the human soul must be superintended by a supernatural life source, completely alien to itself, found only in the Spirit of God. In his contribution to *the Grace New Testament Commentary*, D.L. Hunt clearly makes the contrast between what the unregenerate

---

<sup>11</sup> David R. Anderson, *Free Grace Soteriology*, 47-48.

*psyche* can and cannot do in terms of God’s revelation when he comments, “Acquisition of spiritual truth requires spiritual receptiveness. Paul points out that the natural man (*psychikos*, “an unregenerate person, a person without the Spirit”) does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. The verb *receive* can be translated *welcome*. The unsaved person can understand, but he does not welcome spiritual truth, the things of God’s Word, because they are foolishness to him.”<sup>12</sup>

In short, this revelatory work of the Spirit, found in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, has everything to do with the special illumination of truth for the saved and nothing to do with the, so-called, total inability of the lost to respond to that truth. This point is of the utmost importance in order for the exegete to properly understand what the human *psyche* is and is not capable of doing in response to God, specifically apart from the illuminating work of His Spirit. However, in the final analysis, the human *psyche*, left to itself, is not fully erased of its responsibility to receive God’s revelation, but is fully defaced of God’s divine intention. This transformative work within the human soul must then be accomplished by means of Holy Spirit interaction and impartation of His supernatural life within the human *psyche*.

At this juncture of our study, it is essential for the researcher to draw a clear line separating the human soul (*psyche*) from the human spirit (*pneuma*) in their biblical theology, as did Paul in the afore mentioned passage. This is exactly what Paul affirms in his two ontological categories of people listed in 1 Corinthians 2:15 — the soulish man (*psychikos*) and the spiritual man (*pneumatikos*). In his book, *What is Man?* T. Austin-Sparks highlights the difference between these two elements of a person’s *ego* or inner person, when he states, “...God holds man

---

<sup>12</sup> Hunt, D. L. (2010). [The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians](#). In R. N. Wilkin (Ed.), *The Grace New Testament Commentary* (p. 719). Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society.

responsible as an intelligent, self-conscious being who can at least choose and seek; and, on the other hand, when the spirit has been renewed and brought into living touch with God, the soul is affected thereby, and both receives from God and gives to God by way of the spirit.”<sup>13</sup> As a result, this essential differentiation made between the human soul and spirit leads us to our main subject of interest, the positional salvation of the regenerate human spirit and its potential impact upon the human soul.

## **Positional salvation of the human spirit and its practical impact upon the human soul**

### **Salvation of the unique person in Christ**

When God’s Spirit makes alive the deadened spirit of man, it makes it possible for the soul of man – the mind, will, and emotion- to experience that redemption as well. Within this study of the soteriological impact on the Christian’s *psyche*, the student must first understand this basis of the progressive nature of salvation. For, as inferred from the previous research, positional salvation must affect the individual’s spirit before their soul or personality can be expected to respond in transformation. Among his numerous works on spiritual growth, Miles J. Stanford’s powerful call for the believer’s position in Christ to influence his performance in life is extremely fitting to this discussion. He succinctly writes, “Let the facts of your position overwhelm the feelings of your condition.”<sup>14</sup> Hence, as mentioned above, to effectively understand the influence of progressive salvation on the human *psyche*, God’s permanent and positional work of salvation in the human spirit must first be firmly appropriated. This is necessary for the believer in order to avoid the bondage of legalism, and instead experience true

---

<sup>13</sup> T. Austin-Sparks, *What is Man?*, 18.

<sup>14</sup> Ernest Richards, *Growing in Grace: Eight Biblical studies to help establish the believer in Christ* (Waukesha, WI: Abide Above Publishing, 2017), 46.

liberty found exclusively in the grace that is in Christ (Romans 6:14; 2 Timothy 2:1).

Devastating effects upon the believer's spiritual journey ripple from the philosophical wake of conflating the human spirit's positional regeneration with the human soul's conditional transformation. This theological confusion eliminates any real possibility of assurance for the believer's eternal security. It also relegates spirituality to legalistic performance, motivated by the fear of guilt rather than the gratitude that flows from grace. In his commentary on 2 Corinthians 5:17, Reformed theologian, Iain H. Murry, unintentionally highlights the confusion when positional truth (justification) and conditional experience (sanctification) are inseparably unified. He concludes:

So Calvinism says that Christ's work for us — that is the legal, forensic side of salvation — is never without Christ's work in us. Wherever there is a true change in a man's relationship with God there is also a change in his subjective, moral, personal state. Thus, on this understanding, faced with the question, 'Do I belong to Christ?' the Christian is permitted to argue, 'Yes, I do belong to Christ because I find in myself changes which He alone can work and changes which only His unbought love prompted Him to work.'<sup>15</sup>

However, the Apostle Paul states that this creative work of God, accomplished in every believer, is absolute and permanent! The "new creation" life is entirely based on the Christian's positional standing "in Christ," despite observable change in the individual's character. Thus, personal transformation within the believer's *psyche* must be understood as the effect of the human spirit's regeneration, and never it's cause. This "new creation" work, equivalent to the believer's renewed spirit, is obviously not experiential in nature at its core. Jody Dillow, in *Final Destiny*, masterfully develops a biblical theology of the new creation life within the human spirit:

---

<sup>15</sup> Iain H. Murry, "Will the Unholy Be Saved?," *The Banner of Truth* no. 246 (March 1984): 4.

The new nature is a new metaphysical entity, created perfect by God at regeneration. It is a “creation.” In Ephesians 4:24 we learn that the new man was created *kata theon*, “according to the standard of God,” in righteousness, and in *hosiotes*, “holiness, piety” of truth. It appears that the new self is as perfect as God is, just as it is as righteous as God is (2 Corinthians 5:21). The perfection and righteousness are ascribed to the believer by nature of his being “in Christ.” The fact that it has been “created” means that it has no sin in it. Does this mean that the person is perfect in experience? No. The person, the “ego,” lives either in his new capacity or his old. The person always has both and is always sinful. But when viewed from the single perspective of the person as united to the new creation, that is, the new man, he is perfect. That union, that identity is man as God intends man to be.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, it is only when the human personality or *psyche* is dominated by this “new man”, or regenerate human spirit, that the Christian is living like the person he was created and called to be in Christ. When the soul is actively united with the renewed spirit, this is the unique personhood that God intended the capstone of His creation to be all along – an accurate image bearer of His divine nature (Genesis 1:27).

Not only has the believer’s new position been provided to renew his spirit, but it has also provided the very power source for this position to be personally applied. This power source is none other than the Spirit of God, Himself. T. Austin-Sparks comments on this very concept of the Holy Spirit’s essential interaction with the human spirit, writing:

---

<sup>16</sup> Jody C. Dillow, *Final Destiny: The Future Reign of the Servant Kings* (N.p.: Grace Theology Press, 2013), 378.

Only spirit can serve Spirit (Rom 1:9; 7:6; 12:11). Only spirit can receive revelation from God, Who is Spirit (Rev 1:10; 1 Cor 2:10). We shall return to this later. Let it be understood that God determined to have all His dealings with man, and to fulfill all His purposes through man, by means of that in man which was after His own likeness, that is, his spirit. But this spirit of man for all such Divine intentions must be kept in union with Himself, and never for one moment infringe the laws of its Divine union by crossing over to take counsel with, or be influenced by, his own soul or self-conscious life — the reason, desire or will — as an independent thing.<sup>17</sup>

That being said, is all hope lost of redeeming the human soul to a purpose greater than itself?

The afore quoted author goes on to elaborate on this very question, “When the spirit is renewed, and Christ dwells and reigns with-in — in other words, when we are ‘filled with the Spirit’ — then the soul can come to serve the Lord as a handmaiden of the spirit to real but governed usefulness.”<sup>18</sup> Again, as the human *psyche* is completely unable to experience transformation on its own, the experiential salvation of the Christian soul is completely reliant on the supernatural work of God’s Spirit, which flows through the spiritual conduit of the regenerated human spirit. In his commentary on the spiritual man in 1 Corinthians 3:1a, Arlen L. Chitwood writes on this very concept:

The spiritual man is one who is controlled by the Spirit of God acting through his own spirit. 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

---

<sup>17</sup> T. Austin-Sparks, *What is Man?*, 25.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

body under subjection and exerts control over the soulful man. This, of course, is not performed within his own power, but within the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, both aspects of the person - the human *psyche* through the human *pneuma*, by means of the Holy Spirit- serve distinct, yet necessary roles in the same progressive sanctification process of the believer in Christ. The renewed human spirit makes this experience entirely possible and the spirit's impact upon the human soul makes this process highly personal.

### **Salvation to a unique purpose in Life**

Not only does this positional salvation of the believer's *pneuma* provide practical sanctification for the individual *psyche*, but this regenerative work also carries with it the potential for saving the believer's life on earth for a greater purpose. As referenced earlier in this research, two primary meanings of *psyche* in the New Testament are the individual's inner self and their time spent on earth.<sup>20</sup> The second of these two usages also has great relevance to this extremely important, yet frequently missed, aspect of the soul. This author believes there are at least four distinct instances in the New Testament where the soul refers to the believer's physical life spent on earth (Matthew 16:24-27; Hebrews 10:39; James 1:21 and 1 Peter 1:9)<sup>21</sup>. The significance of this should not be overlooked. Specifically, James 1:21 is of particular relevance to the scope of this paper. James writes to his Jewish Christian audience, who is facing trials in life, "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness

---

<sup>19</sup> Arlen L. Chitwood, *Salvation of the Soul: A Study Concerning the Salvation to be Revealed at the Time of Our Lord's Return* (Norman, OK: The Lamp Broadcast, Inc., 1983), 10.

<sup>20</sup> Jerry Patillo, "An Exegetical Study of the Lord's Logion on the Salvation of the Psyche", 7-8.

<sup>21</sup> Philip Mauro, *God's Pilgrims: Their Dangers, Their Resources, Their Rewards*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc.), 135.

the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” He calls them, as believers, to be impacted in a way that will allow the remainder of their lives to be redeemed for God’s purpose. At first glance, however, this text appears to promote a system of works-based salvation. This common misconception about the salvation of the soul leads to great confusion, for this conclusion would only be possible if the exegete interprets “save your souls” as synonymous with spirit-salvation, justification or going to heaven when a Christian dies. Robert Wilkin sheds some important light on the dangerous assumptions that result from ignoring the discipleship-context of this verse when he explains:

This verse certainly is confusing for the person who understands it as dealing with how a person obtains eternal salvation from hell. Note there are two conditions. The first is turning from one’s sins. This is moral reform. The second is receiving the word, which the following verses clearly show results in doing good deeds. Nowhere does this verse or the verses which follow state that we need to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to obtain this “soul salvation.”<sup>22</sup>

In addition to Dr. Wilkin’s point, when the distinction between the human soul and spirit are lost, these two distinct entities of the believer’s personal make-up (soul & spirit) and God’s intended purpose in life for the believer are all falsely merged into one. In the end, significant damage to the proper interpretation and appropriate application of this text ensues. Thus, the importance of distinguishing the roles of the regenerate spirit and the progressively sanctified soul and earthly

---

<sup>22</sup> Robert Wilkin, Wilkin, “‘Soul Salvation,’ Part 3 – Saving Your Soul By Doing Good – James 1:21,” *Grace In Focus*, February 1, 1992. <https://faithalone.org/grace-in-focus-articles/soul-salvation-part-3-saving-your-soul-by-doing-good/> (accessed September 23, 2021).

experience of the believer (which James 1:21 illustrates the latter two) should be evident to the observant exegete. Arlen Chitwood also elaborates on this important distinction exemplified in James 1:21:

The salvation of the soul, unlike the salvation of the spirit, is conditional. The salvation of the soul is dependent on the life one lives after his spirit has been saved. It is dependent on the individual allowing the Spirit of God to impart spiritual truth and control his life through his own spirit. An individual allowing the Spirit of God to impart spiritual truth and control his life progressively grows into a spiritually mature Christian. In this manner he exerts control over his emotions, feelings, and desires pertaining to his man-conscious (soulical) existence.<sup>23</sup>

Interestingly enough, within the immediate context, James 1:18 states, “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.” This eternal truth is intentionally set against the backdrop of that which God, the Father, can only give to His children (in verse 17) — nothing less than good and perfect gifts. What does James present as the clearest proof of God’s omnibenevolent gift-giving? His gift of regeneration. From his commentary on the epistle of James, David Anderson’s thoughts are very insightful, “James teaches that salvation is an absolutely free gift from above. He almost sounds like John who said, ‘Marvel not that I say unto you, you must be born from above,’ in John 3:7. *Anothen* is usually translated ‘again’, but there is even more support for translating it ‘from above.’ John and James are saying the same thing. Salvation, eternal life, is one of God’s perfect gifts. It comes from

---

<sup>23</sup> Arlen L. Chitwood, *Salvation of the Soul*, 12.

above.”<sup>24</sup> The conclusion from this interpretive information is that this birthing work of God within the believer’s life must be referring to something completely separate from soul salvation. There are two main reasons for this conclusion: 1) this regenerating work is exclusively based on God’s will, by means of His true word, completely apart from man’s effort or design and 2) being born from above took place in one complete or entire action in the past (aorist active indicative)<sup>25</sup>, not progressively in the present time. In contrast to this eternal salvation, the late New Testament scholar, Zane Hodges, expounds on the topic of soul salvation as he compares the broader context of the book of James with the analogy of faith throughout the New Testament:

Many readers and expositors have an automatic reaction to the phrase *save your souls* in English, which leads them to understand it as eternal salvation from hell. But none of James’s readers were at all likely to get such a meaning out of this text. The Greek phrase found here (*sōsai tas psychas hymōn*) was in common use in the sense of “to save the life.” It is used in both the Greek OT as well as in the NT in exactly that sense (see Gen 19:17; 32:30; 1 Sam 19:11; Jer 48:6; Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9). This is its obvious sense also in Jas 5:20, which refers to the physical preservation of a life *from death*. There is not a single place in the entire Greek Bible (i.e., the NT plus the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT) where this phrase signifies deliverance from hell.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> David R. Anderson, *Triumph through Trials: The Epistle of James* (Grace Theology Press, 2013), 44.

<sup>25</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 554-565.

<sup>26</sup> Hodges, Z. C. (2010). [The Epistle of James](#). In R. N. Wilkin (Ed.), *The Grace New Testament Commentary* (p. 1109). Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society.

Therefore, James implicitly yet decisively establishes the initial and positional salvation of the believer's spirit (1:18), necessary for the secondary work of the soul's experiential sanctification (1:21).

Once again, the distinction made between the human spirit and soul is essential for accurately unpacking James' intended meaning and application concerning true soul salvation. Though many wrongly assign spirit salvation to James 1:21, it is vitally important to remember that when James uses the word "to save" or "salvation" (*sozo* or *soteria*), throughout his little letter, it has nothing to do with eternal salvation. Instead, it has everything to do with temporal, or earthly salvation, in the midst of trials (James 1:21; 2:14; 4:12; 5:15, 20). The right response to trials, James says, can help save a believer's life or soul (*psyche*) for greater purpose and value here and now and into eternity future (1:12; 2:12-13; 3:1; 4:12; 5:20). Dr. Anderson summarizes the use of soul salvation in James 1:21, "If I were going to ask you what you were going to do with your life, you would know that by 'life' I mean the rest of your time on earth. Once we are born the countdown begins. The issue becomes whether we will 'save' our time on earth (our lives) for our own selfish purposes or if we will dedicate our time on earth (our lives) to seeking first the kingdom of God."<sup>27</sup> Thus, living a life of active, obedient faith on earth not only enhances the believer's rich experience now, but will also result in eternal rewards later. The believer is saved eternally by faith alone, but his time on earth is saved for a greater purpose and eternal profit (*opheilos* — 2:14) by works. According to James, this is what soul salvation is all about.

---

<sup>27</sup> David R. Anderson, *Triumph through Trials*, 60.

## Conclusion

The author of this paper is fully aware of the limited nature of this research on such a vast and relatively uncharted subject. Admittedly, this is only a shallow skimming of a theological topic that has incredible depth and correlation with numerous aspects of biblical and theological studies. As we have seen, the human *psyche* is the centerpiece of the progressive salvation process for the believer in Christ. This is based on an accurate understanding of the human soul's essence, and the opportunity for the regenerated spirit to influence the soul for personal transformation and purposeful living. Thus, the soteriological development of the human *psyche* should not be seen as optional in nature, but rather as an essential theological underpinning to the believer's unique person and purpose in experiential salvation. As the believer chooses to identify himself—his person or *psyche*—with his new spirit union with Christ—he is as God intends him to be: fully and freely living as one already created and called in Christ.

## Bibliography

- Anderson, David R. *Free Grace Soteriology*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. N.p.: Grace Theology Press, 2018.
- Anderson, David R. *Triumph through Trials: The Epistle of James*. N.p.: Grace Theology Press, 2013.
- Austin-Sparks, T. *What is Man?* Reprint ed. N.p.: Witness and Testimony Publishers, 1939.
- Chitwood, Arlen L. *Salvation of the Soul: A Study Concerning the Salvation to be Revealed at the Time of Our Lord's Return*. Norman, OK: The Lamp Broadcast, Inc. 1983.
- Blenkinsopp, Joseph. "On Saving One's Soul." *Life of the Spirit* 17, no. 199 (March 1963): 355-367. Accessed September 23, 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43706169>.
- Charlton, William. "The Trinity and the Tripartite Soul." *New Blackfriars* 78, no. 915 (May 1997): 237-249. Accessed September 23, 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43249995>.
- Dillow, Joseph C. *Final Destiny: The Future Reign of the Servant Kings*. N.p.: Grace Theology Press, 2013.
- Gingrich, F. Wilbur. *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
- Hodges, Zane C. *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*, edited by Robert Wilkin, N.p.: Grace Evangelical Society, 2013.
- Lazar, Shawn. "The Human Spirit Is Like Marrow (Hebrews 4:12)." Grace In Focus Blog. Entry posted May 19, 2021. <https://faithalone.org/blog/the-human-spirit-is-like-marrow-hebrews-412/> (accessed September 2021).
- Mauro, Phillip. *God's Pilgrims: Their Dangers, Their Resources, Their Rewards*. Hayesville, NC: Schoettle, 1989).
- Olson, C. Gordon. *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism: An Inductive, Mediate Theology of Salvation*. N.p.: Global Gospel Publishers, 2002.
- Patillo, Jerry. "An Exegetical Study of the Lord's Logion on the Salvation of the Psyche." Master's thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1978. <https://faithalone.org/journal-articles/an-exegetical-study-of-the-lords-logion-on-the-salvation-of-the-psyche/> (accessed September 24, 2021).
- Richards, Ernest. *Growing in Grace: Eight Biblical studies to help establish believers in Christ*. Waukesha, WI: Abide Above Publishing, 2017.
- Thomas, W. Ian. *The Mystery of Godliness*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988.
- Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.

Wilkin, Robert. “‘Soul Salvation,’ Part 3 – Saving Your Soul By Doing Good – James 1:21.” *Grace In Focus*, February 1, 1992. <https://faithalone.org/grace-in-focus-articles/soul-salvation-part-3-saving-your-soul-by-doing-good/> (accessed September 23, 2021).