

Back when Christ walked here on the earth, disease and sickness were widespread, uncontrollable, with little or no effective medical solutions available. For this reason, there was always an abundance of sick and dying people and a rampant fear of disease because of the pervasiveness of pain and suffering. There were no twenty-four hour drugstores on every corner, no over-the-counter pill to alleviate the pain or deal with the infection, no Internet Pharmacy whereby you could order from the comfort of your home. It was commonplace for people to die quite young. For this reason, hearing of one who could miraculously transform their ailing bodies and make them whole again spread like wildfire amongst the people. It was indeed exactly as our Gospel reading says, *‘all the city was gathered together at the door.’*

And, because we live in a society which has learned to contain or conquer most of today’s physical ailments, albeit cancer and heart disease remain a challenge, it is extremely difficult to realize the magnitude of what Jesus’ miraculous healings meant to people in those days as He healed many that were sick of divers diseases. His miraculous power became a staggering revelation that He *was* who He claimed to be, the Son of God. But just as it was in that day, so it remains today, for there are so many who continue to misinterpret His actions, who go no further than seeing Him and approaching Him simply as someone who is supposed to meet all their temporary needs including the need for physical healing. But Jesus’ compassion for the sick, diseased and infirmed was an outpouring of His loving heart, and not as we unfortunately witness so often today, a means by which one may draw attention to themselves. Jesus lovingly healed the sick, and with authority cast out the demons as they crossed His path, while He steadfastly continued onward to accomplish that for which He came forth from the Father, to preach the Kingdom of Heaven and to bear the cross for the sin of the world and for the perfecting of the *spirits* of just men (Hebrews 12:23). Although Jesus was always ready to heal those who came to Him with their physical infirmities, it was the state of their eternal soul, their immortal spirits which most grieved His divine heart. Men may not have recognized who it was that was in their midst, but the unclean spirits, the demons did, for they had a history with Him, they knew what He was all about, Who He was - they understood the spiritual realm and thus they feared and trembled at His word, His

authority and His power. They understood the eternal consequences. Perhaps it would serve us well to likewise consider the spirit of man.

With total confidence I would contend that there is not a man or woman who ever walked this earth who could articulate any intelligent explanation of what a spirit truly is. When confronted with this task, the definition always includes a reference to what a spirit is not, by comparing it to that which has a substance. But those, who with great difficulty and dependence upon abstract terminology which is truly more confusing than enlightening, as they attempt to adequately describe for us what a spirit is, fail miserably in their efforts. Neither would I be so pretentious as to offer a definition - for the spirit itself is a thing which can neither be seen, tasted, handled or discerned in any way whatsoever by our 5 natural senses; for if it could thus be perceived, the spirit would thereby belong to the material realm. In this life, we divide all things into matter and spirit and whatsoever can be recognized in any way by the senses is matter, but the spirit is a thing too mysterious, too elusive, to be perceived in any way by our senses, and yet it is life itself, it is that which provides meaning to our very existence.

You may search every highway and byway, every square foot of the entirety of this earth but you shall find no such thing as a *pure* spirit. In the heavenlies, although I cannot perceive it, I would presume it to be a different matter entirely, but here in this world with which we have to do, there is no entity that we can point to and say – ‘therein is a spirit’. But, the spirit is a reality nonetheless, for we encounter such every day, in fact, every moment of our existence, for we are all spirits in bodies. Therefore, because any time that we do encounter a spirit it is within a body we tend to think of the spirit and body as being one thing, indivisible. But you must always remember that bodies and spirits are distinct things and though it has pleased God in this world never to have made a spirit without having made a house for it to dwell in, a body, yet the body is *not* the spirit. This is why Jesus said ‘*It is the spirit that quickeneth – the flesh profiteth nothing*’ (John 6:63). And St. Paul explains, ‘*For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye wish*’ (Galatians 5:17). In the beginning, God formed man of the dust of the ground (the body) and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (spirit) and man became a living being and remains so until his spirit is required of him by God. We are all living testimonies

to this truth, and yet how often do we concentrate strictly on the cravings of the body, even to the detriment of our spirit.

Modern technology, especially in the medical realm, is truly phenomenal, but even so, no one can tell where the life, the spirit, is located within the human body. It would be totally in vain, futile, for a surgeon, regardless of his expertise and sophistication of his computer-aided instrumentation, to lay a human body on the operating table and dissect it thinking he will find the spirit, the life that animated the body. He will find life neither in the brain nor in the heart, nor any other organ. He may cut the body in as many pieces as he desires but he will not find anything, not even a remnant, which he can lay hold upon tangibly and say 'I have found the life source'. Verily, we can see all the effects and evidences of life within us; we can witness the various parts of our body moving in response to this indwelling life; we can behold all the appearances of life which are caused by a supernatural something that is within us – but that life itself cannot be isolated. This miracle we call life, our spirit, is altogether beyond our capabilities as mere mortals to explain, and yet, it is the very core of our being for the body without the spirit is dead.

We are all here today, alive at this moment, spirits, existing on this planet together, but we are such within our bodies. But these bodies are not truly who we are, they are but the houses in which we live. Our spirit is that part of us which is immortal, which defines what we are, who we are, which differentiates us from all others. Though conjoined, or, Siamese twins may share the same body, their spirits are unique. The body is but a garment, a husk that one day we will put off. I question that there is any man or woman who can define what he or she truly is apart from their body. The most that any man can say is 'I know I have an existence, a self-awareness, but what kind of thing my spirit is I do not know, I cannot tell, I have no absolute knowledge of what it is. I feel it, I know it animates my body, I feel its outward manifestations, its impulses, I am certain of my own existence, but what I am I know not.' It is God, and God alone who can say 'I am that I am', who has total self-understanding. But man is a being incomprehensible to himself. Man cannot truly grasp or understand his very own existence. There is truly in our very being, in our flesh, a mystery. And if we know not our own immortal spirits, how can we know He, the Father of all spirits other than through His Son, Our

Savior, Jesus Christ. For in addition to being the Son of God, He is also the son of man, born of the Virgin Mary, that fiat by which He also took flesh from the earth and through which He offers to us life eternal in Him.

Flesh - this body - is but a vessel. Consider not what it is, but rather what it holds. For what have you profited, if you shall gain the whole world, but lose your own soul in the process? Why do you labor so intensely to satisfy the desires, the urges, the demands of the body and starve the spirit in so doing? Why do we all spend so much time and effort on that which shall one day perish? Christ took upon Himself flesh to dwell amongst us that the Word of God could come to us, that His preaching of the Kingdom of God and our salvation could be heard by our spirits, through our bodies, and that He, by His Holy Spirit, might abide in us, His temple, and we abide in Him as His members incorporate. For it is by the spirit which is in you, by which you are a living being, that you truly become one with Him.

... The Rev. Paul G. Stanley†

And so it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam (Christ) became a life-giving spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45).