

## Scriptures and Doctrine :: Comparing Heart and Soul

### Comparing Heart and Soul - posted by todd, on: 2005/5/24 20:43

In the last few years I had been taught that the heart was synonymous with the spirit (of man). Then recently I starting hearing convincing teachings that this is an incorrect understanding and that the heart is actually synonymous with the soul. So I've been leaning towards that understanding for awhile.

Today I was thinking about loving God with all my heart, soul.... wait a minute- I thought they were the same thing!

Now I am unsure once again what I believe about this. I am still leaning towards the heart being most closely associated with the soul but now it seems that they must be different in some way(s). I am feeling like the heart has more to do with passions and motives while the soul has more to do with simple thinking processes (logic, etc.), decision making (the will), and basic emotions (mad, glad, sad, etc.). But it seems clear that these overlap and this is not clear to me.

I would appreciate thoughtful opinions on this matter. Even though I didn't do this above, I would really appreciate it if everyone would use Scripture to back up their ideas because otherwise it would probably get confusing.

### Re: Comparing Heart and Soul - posted by roadsign (), on: 2005/5/24 21:53

Does this help:

the heart" refers to:

The true inner self;  
the center of each person's being and intellect.  
It is with the heart that a man feels, perceives, and makes moral choices. (ie: the will)

As the center of man's perceptual life, the heart acknowledges, knows, discerns and has wisdom. The heart is the place where God's word is to be hidden so that the believer might not sin.

The heart also responds (or fails to respond) to God.  
{sometimes rendered soul)\*

The Vine Expository Dictionary says,

The heart stands for man's entire mental and moral activity, both the rational and the emotional elements.  
...the hidden springs of the personal life.

The Bible describes human depravity as in the heart, because sin is a principle which has its seat in the center of man's inward life, and then defiles the whole circuit of his action

Taken from "A Fatal Diagnosis" - of the heart:  
<http://www.thewayback.net/articles/fataldiagnosis.htm>

Word usage has a way of changing over the course of time. I'm wondering if an attempt at distinguishing the two words would lead anywhere, and if that could make one more faithful to God's greatest commandment.  
Diane

**Re:, on: 2005/5/24 22:03**

Here is one scripture which suggests a function of the heart:

Mark 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. 6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and **reasoning in their hearts**, 7 Why doth this thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? 8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, **he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?**

**Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/5/25 0:36**

Thanks to both of you. I think this is a good start at understanding this topic.

Quote:

"The true inner self;  
the center of each person's being and intellect.  
It is with the heart that a man feels, perceives, and makes moral choices. ( ie: the will)"

It seems that most people agree that the soul consists of the mind, will, and emotions. So, this definition would be directly linked to the soul (the will part) and support the idea that they are the same (i.e. heart = soul).

The more recent teaching I mentioned in my first post, which is in favor of the direct heart/soul connection, also indicated that the heart/soul is also referred to as the "inner man" (i.e heart = soul = inner man) in Scripture and that man's spirit is synonymous with the term "innermost man" ("from your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water"). So, once again, the above quotation would be consistent with the soul/heart teaching. Although the "true inner self" is not a very clear concept to me. I suppose that could be interpreted as either the "inner man" or the "innermost man (being)."

Quote:

"The heart stands for man's entire mental and moral activity, both the rational and the emotional elements.  
...the hidden springs of the personal life."

So here we have the mind and emotions, the other aspects of the soul. This would also seem to strengthen the heart/soul connection.

The only problem with the above descriptions is that they don't have Scriptures to go along with them. But I think they may be helpful nonetheless.

Mark 2:5-8 is helpful. This shows that the heart is involved in reasoning which is a faculty usually associated with the soul. So this, too, backs the heart/soul teaching.

But the question still remains, how are they to be properly understood in comparison with each other? Why doesn't the commandment just say to love God with all our soul and strength?

I just realized that the commandment includes "mind" as well, as distinct from the soul. That's a whole 'nother issue I guess. Isn't the mind part of the soul? Maybe God is just being specific. Like you could say "Take care of your house, the rooms, plumbing, and electricity." Well, all those things are part of the house but you might still mention them specifically just to be clear. That kind of works for me...

**Re: Comparing Heart and Soul - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/5/25 4:31**

See if you think this model works...

The tabernacle was tripartite, containing the outer court visible to all, the holy place hidden from the outside world, the most holy place. In man the most outward is the body, the holy place would be the soul, and the most holy place the spirit. Within the most holy place was a throne; the heart. Rom. 2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. Regeneration would be a new enthronement and from that new centre a new law, of the Spirit, would radiate to bring body soul and spirit into perfect harmony with the will of Him who sits upon the throne; ie entire sanctification? The atmosphere of the spirit would be infused with the will of the enthroned One and instantly 'sanctified'. The soul would come under the continuing influence

of the 'throne' and would experience continuous sanctification while the body would know the impact of the inward transformations but itself waits the day of its final 'redemption'.

What do you think?

**Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/5/25 9:39**

Ron,  
Interesting point of view. That's a new one to me. But something seems inconsistent to me.  
I've heard this parallel of the tabernacle with man, both being tripartite. I like that.  
Was there a throne in the most holy place? I am interested in how you interpret that. Is the mercy seat ever mentioned in terms of a throne?

Rom. 2:29 seems to clearly be talking about "the spirit" as opposed to "the letter." That is, the invisible (in this case, inward) reality versus the visible (outward) reality. Do you interpret this verse as referring to man's spirit?

If these foundational points could be established, the conclusions you formed seem to flow nicely. Although I could see the soul (with the working of the spirit) bringing the body, soul, and spirit into harmony as well because I already imagine the soul as the bridge between body and spirit.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/5/25 14:18**

mmm? you're right. I can't think of a scripture where the mercy-seat is actually called a throne. However the whole pattern of the tabernacle is that of the mobile palace of a desert chieftain. The people were allowed access only into the outer court, but the chief ministers of the clan chief were allowed into the ante-room to the clan chief's presence. No one was allowed to sit in the chieftain's presence. God came to dwell in the midst of his people and was 'located' upon the mercy-seat. Ex. 25:22 And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel. In the later times of Solomon's temple this was where God was 'located'; 2Kings 19:15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.

Psa. 99:1 The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved. The earliest furniture was the chest; used initially as a safe place and the archive for the clan's most important symbols and documents. The 'king' sat in this place of power and authority.

The carry-through in Hebrews seems to presume this kind of pattern. Heb. 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. probably building on the priest-king of Zechariah 6.

**Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/5/27 22:39**

It's an interesting concept Ron. I just don't know if there's enough to conclude much. At this point I am kind of curious why God didn't clarify this more in the Scriptures. It seems like a pretty important thing to understand.

How do you think the terms "inner man" and "innermost being" play into all of this? Do you think the "inner man" refers to the spirit, soul, or heart? How about "innermost being"? It seems clear that "innermost" would refer to the spirit, but perhaps in your case you might think of it as the heart. For out of it flows the issues of life, right? Sounds kind of like "rivers of living water" terminology. Curious of your thoughts.

Re:, on: 2005/5/28 0:05

Quote:

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My understanding of the 'inner man' is, he is something to do with that part of us which is raised to newness of life in Christ, as here, but I notice 'hearts' get a mention, too.

### Ephesians 3

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to **be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man**; 17 That **Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith**; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might **be filled with all the fulness of God**.

The time the Lord made the above verses the most clear to me, they were associated with verses from Psalm 22, like the inner man being strengthened in Ephesians was the cure for the dislocation of the inner man (of Jesus) on the cross. The dislocation caused by sin (in us) is lost in His death and resurrection. But notice, the words 'I am' (below). This is the best sense I have made of it so far, added to much in Romans 6, the idea beginning to emerge that the 'inner man' knows what is right and wants to do it and now is able to control the outer man (the flesh?). 'Innermost being' might be more to do with the spirit and 'inner man' to do with the soul.

### Psalm 22

14 **I am** poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: **my heart** is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. 15 **My strength** is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

### Romans 6

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that **like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life**. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also of resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. **Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him**: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: **but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members instruments of righteousness unto God**.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/5/28 2:43

Quote:

-----How do you think the terms "inner man" and "innermost being" play into all of this? Do you think the "inner man" refers to the spirit, soul, or heart? How about "innermost being"? It seems clear that "innermost" would refer to the spirit, but perhaps in your case you might think of it as the heart. For out of it flows the issues of life, right? Sounds kind of like "rivers of living water" terminology. Curious of your thoughts.  
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The whole terminology is so rich and hence difficult to put into little boxes. For example.

emotion is connected with the 'bowels' 1Kings 3:26; Psalms 22:14; Song 5:4; Isaiah 16:11; 63:15; Jeremiah 4:19; Lamentations 1:20; 2:11; 2 Corinthians 6:12; Philippians 1:8; 2:1; Colossians 3:12; Philemon 1:7,12,20; 1John 3:17

and it is not only the heart but the kidneys which are part of our human problem. Job 16:13; 19:27; Psalms 7:9; 16:7; 26:2; 73:21; 139:13; Proverbs 23:16; Isaiah 11:5; Jeremiah 11:20; 12:2; 17:10; 20:12; Lamentations 3:13; Revelation 2:23

The reference to 'rivers of living water' is also interesting :-) The KJV says 'belly', the more polite versions says 'innermost being', the Greek says colon!

I think it is partly due to this richness that many reformed believers have opted for a two part explanation in which they bundle every 'inner' thing into the soul.

It might interest you that God also has some of these aspects...  
does some searches on soul and heart...

The other thing to bear in mind is Hebrew parallelisms. A poetic device in which the same truth is expressed in a different way. My understanding is that 'heart and spirit' are 'replaced' in regeneration, but that 'soul' continues.