

How you measure it



FORGIVE ME; I'M RUNNING A BIT LOW ON SPIRIT RIGHT NOW

We now possess the spirit of God (1 Cor. 3:16). Everything that has life has spirit, for apart from spirit there can be no life. Our Lord had the spirit without measure (Jn. 3:34). We now have the same quality of spirit He had, but in dribblets. This is why we can't do everything we want to do, as our Lord could. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mt. 26:41). At present, our flesh overwhelms our spirit most of the time. This is by design, so that we might rely on Christ and not on ourselves. This is why you should not beat yourself up too badly when you fail. Hello? You're 5% spirit and 95% flesh. I have a feeling that when you're filled to the brim with spirit—as He was—sin will no longer be an issue.

Lust

Galatians 5:17—“For the flesh is lusting against the spirit, yet the spirit against the flesh. Now these are opposing one another, lest you should be doing whatever you may want.”

It is standard procedure to understand the above verse this way: *Thank God that the spirit lusts against the flesh and keeps us from doing all the bad things we want to do.* True enough. But we're missing half the verse: “For the flesh is lusting against the spirit.” Thus, the flesh keeps us, for now, from doing everything our spirits want to do. We should thank God for this as well, *because this is what keeps us dependent upon God's power.*

Martin Zender's Clanging Gong News

"If I know all mysteries and all knowledge, but have no love, I am a clanging gong" --1 Cor. 13:1-2



Two out of three isn't bad.

Light, sound, and a Person

I have one more experience to share with you from the *Jesus Christ Superstar* production I witnessed in Cleveland earlier this month.

The home television screen so removes you from whatever drama you're witnessing. The enjoyment of a stage production is that you are there. This experience is heightened by rich sound, thoughtful lighting, live actors, and hundreds—perhaps thousands—of fellow audience members.

Ted Neeley, who played Jesus Christ, was on stage. I don't remember which scene it was; it doesn't matter. There may have been others on stage with him; I don't recall. All I recall is the Jesus figure, and a hyper-awareness of lighting and sound, and a sense of the many eyes in the theater gazing collectively at this one spot where the man portraying our Lord stood.

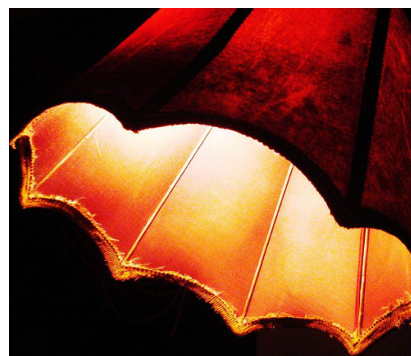
The lights illumined the stage from what seemed like a hundred locations: blue and orange and red, simultaneously. The lights warmed the theater on this cold, blustery night. With the light came an orchestral crescendo. Just below the surface of human perception, the audience hummed in expectancy and awe. And yet I did perceive this—so much so that my heart quaked and I could not stop it.

IN POSSESSION; we each have our own spirit

Someone wrote me recently and asked whether we had individual spirits, or whether we were merely in possession of spirit. I unintentionally misinformed this person, have since seen new light on the matter, and wish to correct the error.

It has always been my thought that spirit is the energy by which God operates. And it is. But I have pictured the spirit coursing through us

On the day of our change, we are not going to be wisps, or insensate spirits. We will be a new *humanity* (Eph. 2:15), filled with spirit, possessing literal, spiritual bodies (1 Cor. 15:45). When the fullness of spirit enters and animates us, we will once again possess souls. With these souls, we will feel and hear and see and smell. There *will* be light, and it will illuminate sights we never dreamed possible. There *will* be sound, and it will move our souls in ways we never before felt.



And there, standing before us, will be a Man. Pause and consider: we are going to see Jesus Christ. Our Lord has a body; He exists in time and space. Right now, He is *somewhere*. And He is coming for us. For the eons, He will retain upon His physical frame the wounds that gave us life. We will literally gaze upon His literal nail prints. The marks of the scourge—each

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as electricity courses through a light bulb. Is it always the same electricity going through the bulb? No. It's still electricity, but the elements keep changing. It's as if the electricity is going in one end of the bulb, and out the other.

1 Corinthians 3:16—“The spirit of God is making its home in us.” This now suggests to me that it is the same spirit; it enters us, and stays. Thus, it becomes our spirit.

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...light and sound

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lash located precisely upon His body where it landed 2000 years ago—will fill us with such love for Him.

When I saw this Man who for the briefest of moments was not Ted Neeley, I knew what would happen with me: I would fall to my knees in a rapture. I would wrap my arms around His legs and press my face into His thighs. I said to myself in that theater: *My God! My heart will burst!* I knew then that no evil that has ever happened to me would matter. It would all be as nothing in the light of such glory. In fact, only a knowledge of evil could make such glory and relief and light and warmth possible. Only the cold, blustery night could prepare me for the contentment of the theater.

...our own spirit

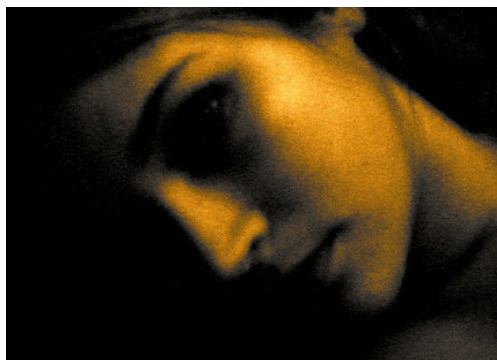
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This is especially comforting when considering death. At death, the body returns to the soil from which it came, the soul (that is, our sensations) disappear (“hades,” the unseen), and our spirits return to God. Listen to what Jesus said as He expired on the cross: “Father, into Thy hands am I committing My spirit (Lk. 23:46). He did not commit His *self* to God, or His body or His soul, but His spirit: *His* spirit. But didn’t Jesus die? Yes. For three days, He, personally, did not exist. And yet His spirit went to be with God.



The Cleveland audience looked on. On the day of our change, the celestial audience will gaze in holy amazement at the re-union of Christ and His body. Allow yourself to think this and believe it because it is true: *our change is going to feel so good.*

“That which the eye did not perceive, and the ear did not hear, and to which the heart of man did not ascend—whatever God makes ready for those who are loving Him” (1 Cor. 2:9). ■



Hold on a moment. Am I saying that there is consciousness in the spirit? No! Death is death; our Lord was unaware of the passage of three days; He was dead. But He committed His spirit to God for safekeeping. I am beginning to understand now that the spirit does not require consciousness to *exist*.

More on this next week, including a verse you may never have considered. I promise that you will receive new comfort concerning death. ■

Two men decide the fate of all

1 Corinthians 15:21—“For since, in fact, through a man came death, through a Man, also, comes the resurrection of the dead.”

One man brought death to all, and one Man brings to the same all, life. “For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified” (1 Cor. 15:22). Kind of makes you feel a little helpless on both counts, doesn’t it? **THAT’S THE IDEA.** ■

What a Revelation!



RETHINKING THE GLORY

I have come full circle. When I was a Christian, it was all about heaven and how I was going to feel there. It was all about me and not so much about the glory that God would receive. Then I became a believer and everything shifted. Then, it became all about God and Christ. I, personally, got lost somewhere in the vast spirituality of “God all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). Thank God that He has given me my salvation back. God has saved *me*, Martin Zender. “All in all” is not some indistinct mass of corporate—albeit spiritual—vapor. Rather, it is a multitude of individual people filled with God’s spirit. There are so many joys and spiritual thrills that God has prepared for you, personally, that will accompany you for eternity. I, myself, am looking forward to defying gravity.

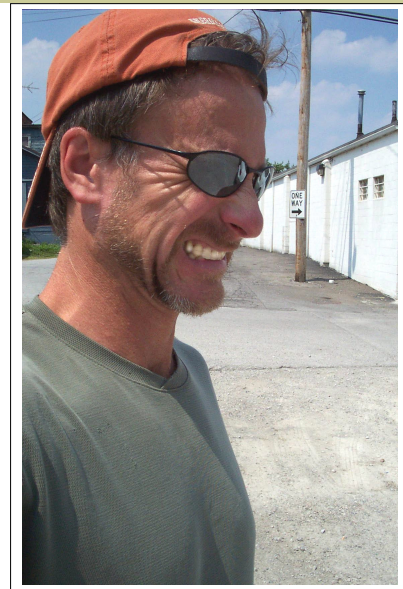
Q&A

Will we be raised with our same bodies? Didn’t Lazarus come from the grave with the same body he went in with?

Lazarus did, yes. But not everyone will. Some bodies are long decomposed. Some bodies have been burned by fire. Will God then gather the identical *elements* of our bodies in resurrection? He needn’t do this. Even as we live, our bodies rejuvenate themselves every seven years or so, so that we are not the same body we were seven years ago. And yet, we’re still the same person. Our identity is preserved in our spirits, not in our bodies. When our spirits are returned to us at resurrection, we are the same people we were, but with new bodies—and certainly new sensations.

Rants & Stuff

The Apostle Paul says we should not murmur (Philippians 2:14).
Therefore, I shall rant.



I am weak. Therefore I am strong. So be quiet.

Allow me to fill you in on a great secret: In Christ, we cannot lose. If we do well, we say, “God did it through me.” And if we do poorly, we say, “Well? I am weak. Therefore, I am strong. So be quiet.” This is foolproof.

When things go poorly for me, I really do rant. This section is titled “Rants & Stuff” for a reason. I am generally a peaceful person. But sometimes, no matter how hard I try, I lose my cool. This is usually the result of a straw that—added to several other straws—breaks my back.

For instance, the other day a medical bill came that I thought was going to be taken care of by my wife’s insurance. I opened the bill and noticed that it wasn’t taken care of. As I shared with you last week, I have just learned the lesson of being a slave of Christ. As a slave, nothing I “own” is mine. God and Christ control my money, my family, my life. If They want to take my money away, They can. I accept this. And while in the process of accepting it, I kick chairs as hard as I can.

I kicked the dining room chair as hard as I could and envied the dead. *At least dead people don’t have to pay medical bills!* I ranted to myself. But as long as I was still alive, I thought I might as well go to the grocery store and gorge on chocolate. *That will teach those stupid doctors a lesson!* said I, loudly, to myself. I ate four chocolate bars in three minutes. I burped, and it smelled like a city in Pennsylvania.

Thirty minutes later, my little tantrum ended. Lying awake in bed that night (in a Kit Kat induced state of awareness), I realized I had done everything wrong. My every reaction to the bill was not the way a child of God should act. *I am so weak,* I

“I burped, and it smelled like a city in Pennsylvania.”

said to myself. Then it hit me: **2 Corinthians 12:10**, “Whenever I may be weak, then I am strong.”

You cannot believe how large Christ will loom in your life—and how large a smile will come to your face—when you start taking this verse literally. And strange, too, how the grace of God always seems to make you want to do better next time. ■



NEWSFLASH: God’s power made perfect in infirmity



What kind of crazy verse is this: “My power in infirmity is being perfected” (2 Corinthians 12:9). No one in this world operates this way. What football coach says: “We need to win the championship in December, so go out and recruit that quarterback from State who threw ninety-seven interceptions last year.” What businessman prances into the office of the CEO and crows: “This has been the worst quarter in our company’s history!” And yet, here is where God starts. This is why He apprehended the worst sinner in the world (Paul) to herald His gospel of grace. When God changes Paul—who gets the credit?

Let’s say the quarterback from State ends up taking the team to the State Championship. The quarterback is celebrated, yes—but *the coach is a sheer genius.*

This walk is all about making God look good, not us. The rougher the raw material, the better His handiwork shines. The startling result? When we are weak, HE is strong. ■