

1 Cor. 9:27: The Spiritual Life and the Body

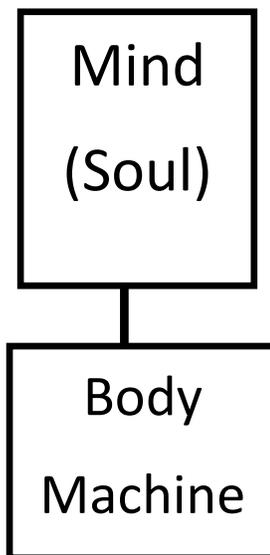
Paul writes in

1 Corinthians 9:27: But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

1 Corinthians 9:27 ἀλλ' ὑπωπιάζω μου τὸ σῶμα καὶ δουλαγωγῶ, μήπως, ἄλλοις κηρύξας, αὐτὸς ἀδόκιμος γένωμαι.

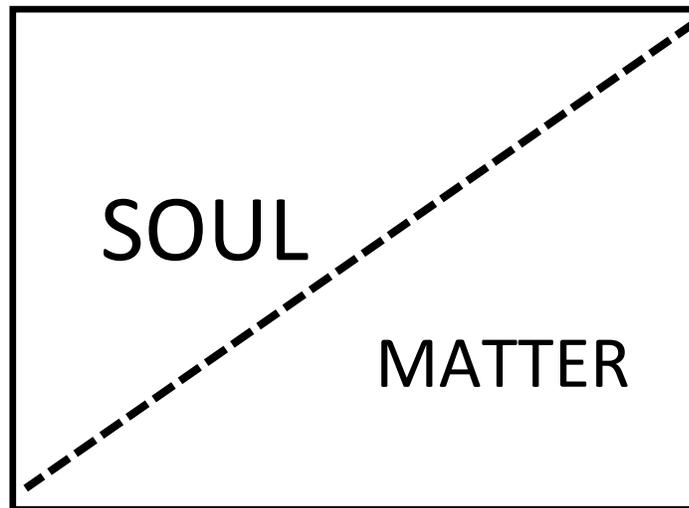
Paul clearly sees control of the body as integral to spiritual development. This strong connection between the body and the soul is often neglected or rejected by some contemporary Christians who do not view control over their physical bodies as integral to their spiritual growth. They have adopted, wittingly or unwittingly, the Platonic and Cartesian view of anthropology, which makes sharp dichotomy between the human mind/soul and the body.

Anthropology according to
Plato and Rene Descartes



Of course, if the body is just a physical shell, a way to get around, it is hard to make sense of many Scriptures that teach that the body/flesh can be a vehicle of evil that overpowers the soul.

A better way of viewing anthropology, a view that accords with Scripture, is the hylomorphic view of Aristotle and Aquinas:



Man is not merely soul nor merely matter. He is a composite of soul and matter. He is a psychobiological unity. Consider how injury to brain matter affects the soul/mind or how physical addictions to alcohol and drugs affect a person's thinking and volition. Thinking is indeed a spiritual/immaterial act, but in this life it is inextricably connected to matter.

Water may be H₂O, but one does not ask whether a patient was scalded by the H or the O. So, it is with man, our acts are not purely soulish or material. We are both/and. And we become what we do.

Failure to control, train, and habitualize the body for good always leads to the ingraining of vices in the body, which control the soul and spawn such evils as gluttony, illicit sex, and many forms of addictions, all of which end up destroying a man's capacity for true happiness—for true happiness is always related to the perfecting/maturity of human nature.

It is the mature individual who has control over this body, a body that is to be dedicated to God rather than to the carnal pleasures of the world:

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present **your bodies** a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.