THE QUESTION

What did John Chrysostom teach about the human soul?

Asked by a THF member on July 28, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 7 numbered quotations · the 6 early Christian passages and 123 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-did-john-chrysostom-teach-about-the-human-soul

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

John Chrysostom taught that the soul is the chief and most precious part of a person, worth more than the whole world. He said the body should serve the soul and not rule it, and that neither body nor soul can do anything truly good without help from above. Sin, he warned, makes the soul grow old.

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HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

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POINT 1 OF 7

The soul is the chief thing in us

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Chrysostom tells the rich that wealth means nothing if the soul is not glad. A well-fed body cannot make up for a soul that is wasting away, so he urges his hearers to care for the soul first.

1

> “For the soul is the chief thing in us. And if the body is well fed while the soul is wasting away, that prosperity means nothing to you.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Matthew* 55 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 6, page 5 **Read it in the library ›**

POINT 2 OF 7

Nothing in the world equals the soul

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Using Christ's words about gaining the whole world, Chrysostom says no possession is worth as much as the soul. He warns that the love of money takes over people's souls and makes parents careless about their children's salvation.

2

> “For nothing is equal to the soul. For He says, "What does a man profit if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?"”
>
> *later in the same passage*
>
> “It has pushed aside the strict fear of God and seized the souls of men like a rebel chief seizing a citadel.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Matthew* 59 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 5, page 5 **Read it in the library ›**

POINT 3 OF 7

The body should obey the soul

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Chrysostom compares the soul to a charioteer and the flesh to the horse. The body is not evil, but trouble comes when it takes control. Its proper place is to be led by the soul.

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3 “Because whenever the flesh lifts herself up and gains control over her charioteer, she causes countless evils. The virtue of the flesh is to be subject to the soul. Its vice is to rule the soul.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Ephesians* 5 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 3, page 5 **Read it in the library ›**

POINT 4 OF 7

Body and soul both need God's help

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

He explains that the soul on its own, like the body on its own, cannot reach true goodness. Both need direction from heaven. He compares this to good eyes that still stumble without light.

4 “For neither the body nor the soul by itself, if it does not receive the impulse that comes from far above, is able to accomplish anything great or noble.”

later in the same passage

“The eyes are good, for example, but without light they will make countless mistakes.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Ephesians* 5 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 3, page 5 **Read it in the library ›**

POINT 5 OF 7

Scripture sometimes calls the soul the spirit

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Reading Paul's call to glorify God in body and spirit, Chrysostom says that here the word spirit means the soul, set beside the body. We honor God in both by living purely and modestly.

5 “And how can someone glorify Him in the body, you may ask, and how in the spirit? Here the soul is called the spirit, to distinguish it from the body.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on First Timothy* (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

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POINT 6 OF 7

Sin makes the soul grow old

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Chrysostom says a changed life after baptism is a kind of resurrection now. But going back to old sins, like greed or wrong desires, makes a person old inside, and what grows old is ready to vanish.

6 “For either the love of money, or slavery to desires not fitting, or any other sin whatever, usually makes the one who does it old.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Romans* (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 2, page 5 **Read it in the library ›**

POINT 7 OF 7

Real faith comes from a fervent soul

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

He praises faith as a great blessing, but only when it flows from deep love and an eager soul. Such faith, he says, makes people truly wise about heavenly things.

7 “Faith then is a great blessing when it rises from glowing feelings, great love, and a fervent soul. It makes us truly wise.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on John* 63 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 1, page 5 **Read it in the library ›**

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages are a small sample from Chrysostom's sermons, not every place he spoke about the soul.
- They do not explain where the soul is located or exactly how it is joined to the body.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

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WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 6 early Christian passages and 123 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages (sources 1–6, grouped by writer, earliest first), then 123 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *6 passages from 1 writer*

John Chrysostom, *c. 386–407 AD · sources 1–6*

1. *Homilies on John* 63 (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** "Greeks, on the contrary, did not at first know what manner of thing the soul was, and when they had found out, and had distinguished it from the body, they… [continues online] **read ›**
2. *Homilies on Romans* **Quote 6, page 4** us watchful, he will make our profit even greater. This is how Paul stirs up the Ephesians, by describing his fierceness. Yet we sleep and snore, though we have to… [continues online] **read ›**
3. *Homilies on Ephesians* 5 **Quotes 3, 4, page 3** kind of sin. Why is it called the mind of the flesh, when the flesh can do nothing without the soul? He does not say this to insult the flesh… [continues online] **read ›**
4. *Homilies on First Timothy* (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 3** "one, and how in the spirit? The soul is here called the spirit to distinguish it from the body… [continues online] **read ›**
5. *Homilies on Matthew* 59 (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** "nothing is equal to the soul. Because, What is a man profited, says He, if he shall gain the whole world, but lose his own soul… [continues online] **read ›**
6. *Homilies on Matthew* 55 (1885 English) **Quote 1, page 2** "of all things in us the soul is chief… [continues online] **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *123 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Genesis 3:19 · 17:11 · 18:2 · 18:4 · 18:7 · 18:9 · 18:21 · 18:32 · 19:33 · 19:36 · 20:1 · 20:2 · 20:17 · 21:9 · 21:14 · 21:19 · 22:3 · 22:12 · 22:17 · 24:11 · 24:15 · 25:1 · 25:11 · 25:22 · 26:13 · 26:22 · 26:24 · 26:25 · 26:26 · 26:30 · 46:4

Exodus 4:10 · 12:8 · 14:22 · 30:10

Numbers 33:15 · 33:37

Deuteronomy 21:10

Joshua 1:3 · 2:17 · 2:21 · 3:3 · 3:6 · 4:19 · 5:2 · 5:9 · 5:13 · 5:15 · 6:20 · 6:25 · 8:10 · 8:22 · 9:3 · 9:21 · 10:12 · 10:16 · 10:31 · 11:1 · 11:23 · 14:1 · 14:13 · 14:14 · 15:63 · 17:15 · 18:28 · 22:21

Judges 2:7 · 2:8 · 2:11 · 3:9 · 4:21 · 7:3

1 Samuel 2:2

Psalms 19:1 · 22:18 · 37:25 · 41:9 · 69:9 · 103:1 · 119:18

Proverbs 3:19 · 8:25

Isaiah 10:10 · 26:20 · 54:13

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Jeremiah 2:21 · 3:7 · 10:14 · 11:4 · 18:10 · 20:7
Ezekiel 13:18 · 16:23 · 16:30 · 17:3
Hosea 2:7 · 6:2 · 7:4
Amos 8:11
Habakkuk 2:15
Zechariah 13:7
Malachi 4:2
Matthew 1:18
Luke 11:24
Acts 18:3
Romans 7:2
1 Corinthians 9:15
2 Corinthians 3:7 · 3:16 · 11:2
1 Timothy 1:9 · 2:7 · 6:12
Titus 1:14
Hebrews 7:18 · 9:11 · 9:12 · 9:24 · 10:1 · 10:28 · 11:31
Revelation 20:6 · 21:4

Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “What did John Chrysostom teach about the human soul?” on July 28, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY