THE QUESTION

What did John Chrysostom teach about the soul?

Asked by a THF member on August 9, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 6 numbered quotations · the 4 early Christian passages 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-soul

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

Chrysostom taught that a person is made of two substances, a soul and a body, and that the soul is invisible. Its beauty is not good looks but virtues like self-control, love and obedience to God. The body should serve the soul, and neither can do anything truly good without help from above.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
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 6

Soul and body are two substances

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

Chrysostom says plainly that a human being has both a soul and a body, and that these are two different substances. Each has its own kind of beauty, so the soul is not just another name for the body.

1 “There is a soul and a body; they are two substances. There is a beauty of the body, and there is a beauty of the soul.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Second Homily on Eutropius* 1 (c. 386–407 AD) **Source 1, page 4** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 6

The soul is invisible, its beauty is virtue

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

He turns from the face to the soul and says its beauty cannot be seen with the eyes. Instead he lists moral qualities. In his view, a beautiful soul is one that is self-controlled, kind, generous and obedient to God.

2 “Look on that beauty, or rather listen to it, for you cannot see it, since it is invisible.”

later in the same passage

“What then is beauty of soul? It is self-control, gentleness, almsgiving, love, brotherly kindness, tender affection, obedience to God, the fulfilling of the law, righteousness, and contrition of heart.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Second Homily on Eutropius* 1 (c. 386–407 AD) **Source 1, page 4** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 3 OF 6

The flesh should obey the soul

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

Explaining Paul's phrase about the mind of the flesh, he says the flesh does nothing without the soul. The body is good, but it goes wrong when it takes control. He uses the picture of a horse that needs a rider.

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3 “Why is it called the mind of the flesh, when the flesh can do nothing without the soul?”

later in the same passage

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

POINT 4 OF 6

Neither soul nor body succeeds alone

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

He warns that the soul is not enough by itself either. Both soul and body need direction from God above to do anything great or noble. Without that help, he says, their acts perish.

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.”

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

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

POINT 5 OF 6

Sin harms the soul, not only the body

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

Speaking about drunkenness, he says it ruins the soul as well as the body. He also says God made our bodies need little, to remind us that we were made for another life.

5 “For it does not save, but destroys, and not only the body, but the soul also.”

later in the same passage

“By this He declares to us only this: that we are hurrying on toward another life.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on Ephesians* 19 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

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

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POINT 6 OF 6

Souls need patient, repeated care

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

He compares the soul to a field. Earth bears a crop after one sowing, but a soul often needs teaching many times, and even then it must be protected so the good seed is not lost.

6 "When the earth has received seed once, it immediately brings out its crop and does not need a second sowing. But it is not so with our souls."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on John* 18 (c. 386–407 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 4, page 5 **Read it in the library ›**

THE LIMITS

What these passages don't tell us

- These passages do not say where the soul comes from or describe what happens to it between death and the resurrection.
- They come from sermons on other subjects, so they are not a full account of everything Chrysostom taught about the soul.
- 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.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 4 early Christian passages we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages (sources 1–4, grouped by writer, earliest first). **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 *4 passages from 1 writer*

John Chrysostom, *c. 386–407 AD · sources 1–4*

1 *Second Homily on Eutropius* 1 (1885 English) **Quotes 1, 2, page 2** "is soul and body: they are two substances: there is a beauty of body, and there is a beauty of soul… [continues online] **read ›**

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2 *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 ›**

3 *Homilies on Ephesians* 19 (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 3** “that, not the body only, but the soul also… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Homilies on John* 18 (1885 English) **Quote 6, page 4** “with our souls it is not so, and one must be content, after having sown many times, and manifested much carefulness, to be able once to receive fruit… [continues online] **read ›**

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 soul?” on August 9, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY