

## Does Your *Splagchnon* “Growl”?

The etymology of words interests some preachers. This is because we often gain additional insights to biblical terms by researching their literal, original language meanings. For instance, *splagchnon* (pronounced **splangk**·non) is basically the Greek (the original language of much of the New Testament) word for “bowels”- literally, the “intestines,” cf. Acts 1:18. Sometimes, organs such as the heart, liver, and lungs were included in the term. Ancients regarded them as the seat of violent passions such as anger and love. But the Hebrews tended to think of *splagchnon* as the origin of more tender emotions such as kindness, benevolence, and compassion. Thus, the term is often translated as “*tender mercy*,” Luke 1:78; “*affections*,” 2Corinthians 6:12; and “*heart of compassion*,” Colossians 3:2. The word itself may be foreign to us, but we understand the concept of it. We often speak of a “gut feeling” about someone or something.

But after doing some research for a sermon recently that included this particular word, something dawned on me. My stomach often “growls.” I’m not a small man, and I have a pretty fast metabolism, so I eat often. When I haven’t eaten in a while, my “gut” growls to let me know it’s time for more food! The epiphany of these things came when I wondered whether or not our spiritual “gut” growls when it’s hungry? Does yours? Consider Romans 8:23, “... even we ourselves **groan within ourselves**, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.” Is this not comparable to the hunger pains and “growling” of our stomachs when we’re hungry? Paul certainly seems to be using this “*groan(ing) within ourselves*” to reference an inner longing of our hearts and spirits! But there’s more to this...

The ancients also considered the “gut” to be the center, or essence of who we are. Thus to them, our *spirits* or *souls* resided there. Think again of David’s words:

- Psalm 42:1, “As the deer pants (or “longs for”) the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God.”
- Psalm 42:3, “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?”
- Psalm 63:1, “O God, Thou art my God; I shall seek Thee earnestly; my soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns (or “faints”) for Thee.”

Now think about it for a moment: How many times has your (physical) stomach growled in hunger, and you stood at the pantry or refrigerator- knowing you were hungry, **but not really knowing what you wanted?** You wanted *something*, but had no idea *what*. Perhaps you even walked away with nothing, frustrated.

Our *hearts* and *souls* need the sustenance of God and faith in Him. The more we deny this need, the more our *spirits* “groan within ourselves.” Without God, we are empty, frustrated, and famished. Our *splagchnons* are “growling,” but we don’t realize for what!

The world is currently full of people with empty *splagchnons*. Their *inward parts* are “*hunger(ing) and thirst(ing) for righteousness*” (Matthew 5:6), but because they seek to *satisfy* this emptiness with possessions, power, and even violence instead of filling it with faith, they remain hungry and frustrated. “Yes,” our *splagchnons* are “growling,” even loudly, but so far, most seem to have no idea why or how to appease them.