

# **THE SPIRITUAL MAN: Vol I**

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# **THE SPIRITUAL MAN: Vol I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This book is divided into three volumes with ten sections. The writing of the book began in the latter part of 1925 and was completed in June 1927.

The following explanation by the author himself on the nature of the book is quoted from an announcement in Issue No. 3 of The Present Testimony:

"This book puts particular emphasis on spiritual reality. Hence, what is covered in each volume can all be attested in experience; nothing is there as an empty word.

"The most frustrating experience of believers today is that in seeking for progress on the spiritual path, they do not find the proper way. As a result, they grope in darkness, being at times high or low, lingering around the crossroads year in and year out, and having no one to consult for direction. The author of this book was such a one. For this reason, the book emphasizes clear guidance on the proper path. Every chapter of this book is for the purpose of directing the believers on the right course. Therefore, all those who seek after God with an honest heart can go step by step accordingly. Almost every chapter begins from the position of the sinner and goes on step by step toward the peak of spiritual life.

"The whole book covers a wide scope; every question concerning the spiritual life that the believers want to know but cannot answer is explained here. For example, difficult matters such as hearing God's voice and understanding God's will are all clearly explained. After reading this book, all major spiritual problems will be fully resolved.

"Regeneration, salvation, sanctification, denying the self, the filling of the Holy Spirit and power, the baptism of the Spirit, fellowship, prayer, Bible study identification in death, the flesh, the soulish life, the emotion, supernatural experiences, miracles, the discernment of true and false speaking in tongues, the intuition, the conscience, revelation of God, spiritual work, warfare with Satan, the evil spirits, demon possession, the free will, the renewing of the mind, passivity, consecration, affection, the feeling of coldness and hotness, the body, illness, the way to escape death, and countless other subjects are explained in the deepest as well as the simplest way.

"If a believer wants to walk on the proper spiritual course, he must read this book. If anyone wants to help others and explain to others their true condition, he also cannot skip this book.

"All who read this book will find light even on many ordinarily overlooked topics. Even a matter as familiar as regeneration will be understood in a way that was unthought of before."

## **PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION**

Thank the Lord that since the publication of this book in the fall of 1928, believers from various places have put in orders for it. Within a short time, we sold out of the first edition. Many have undauntedly told us how they have experienced deliverance through the truth recorded in this book. This makes us realize that God's commission to us has not been in vain. We really have to thank the Lord for the way this book has been received by God's children.

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Since then, for about two years, we have not been able to offer this book in its complete three-volume set. Originally, I had no intention to print the second edition, thinking that two thousand copies in circulation would be enough. At the same time, I was reluctant to hastily make another edition because I wanted to see how much result the outworking of the truth of this book would produce. But during the past two years, there have been more than a few hundred requests for this book. We have also seen from many testimonies that the truth of this book can be put into practice, that it can liberate men, and that it is what God's children need. Hence, we feel that we cannot delay reprinting it.

This edition is not much different from the first edition in teaching and in truth. However, because of the new light and new awareness I received, which were not yet clear at the time I wrote the first edition, I have undertaken, with much effort, to make many changes and additions in this edition. In such an editing work, I have asked the Lord's help and tried my best to match the terms used in the book with those used in the Scripture.

We know that the terms that we use are often different from those used in the Bible. For example, we use the word "redemption" with reference to the whole of the Lord Jesus' work on the cross. But the biblical meaning of the word "redemption" is only limited to the covering of sin.

Hence, there are many terms which sound right to us but are not accurate if judged by the Bible. For example, we all know the expressions "the overcoming of sins," "the crucifying of the self on the cross," and "the crucifixion of the soul-life" and what they refer to. But these expressions are not found in the Bible. The Bible does not have these things. The Bible does not speak of "the overcoming of sins," but "the deliverance from sin" and "being freed from sin." God's way of salvation is not for us to overcome sin, but to crucify our old man so that we are delivered from sin and the power of sin. (When this book uses the expression "overcoming sins," it is merely making reference to one's experience.) Again, the Bible does not say that we should "die to the self," but that we should "deny the self." One does not "crucify the self"; the self is dealt with by "taking up the cross." This is because the self is our own personality and can never be crucified. Once the self dies, our own person dies. The self is the person. Hence, we can only deny the self and take up the cross to deal with it. The meaning of bearing the cross is not to die, but to be willing to die. In the same way, the Bible never says to "crucify the soul-life"; it only says to "lose the soul-life," for if our natural life is crucified, our physical life will be gone as well.

This does not mean that we were not aware of these distinctions in the first edition. However, we thought that if we were right in the spiritual facts and principles, outward terminology would not matter much. While we were making changes even at this time, we did not try to correct these errors altogether. It was during the past few days that the Lord reminded us to specifically take care of this matter. He has shown us how an inaccurate term can lead to inaccurate truths, and how accuracy in terminology is equally important. Of course, we would rather have spiritual reality than accurate terminology. But when we do have the spiritual reality, it is also valuable that we have the accurate terminology, not to mention that accurate terminology will afford us new light. Hence, we have changed our terms in many places. I hope that we can do the same in our other publications.

I would like the readers to pay attention to the subjective result of the truth in us. For this reason, I have not mentioned many of the objective truths. This is the nature of this book. It was because I have felt that subjective truths are too few that I began to write this book. Therefore, the readers should know that the various truths mentioned in this book are not meant to be all that can be said about them. They

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are merely an exposition of these truths in their subjective aspects.

Soon this book will go out again to do the work that the Lord has allotted it to do. At this juncture, I can only feel the inadequacy of my writing. God's truth always suffers loss at the hand of man. I can only say that all the glory should be to God and all the shame to me. May God bless what He can bless.

The author

Shanghai, May 30, 1932

## PREFACE

I give thanks with all my heart to the Lord whom I serve, for He has given me the privilege to write this book. I had hoped that a better writer would be raised up to fulfill this responsibility, but it has pleased the Lord that I should take it up myself. According to my choice, I should and would be the last one to write such a book. My reluctance is not due to my timidness, but to my thought that writing such a book on spiritual progress and the stratagems of warfare is not an easy task for one who has believed in the Lord for less than ten years. Among the spiritually seeking believers there is always the danger of excessive subjectivity concerning one's own spiritual experience. This is not healthy, for self-examination, the analyzing of oneself, is a means of cultivating the self-life and fills a person's mind with vain thoughts. The Bible does permit believers to relate their own experience; this is something that the Holy Spirit would lead men to do. But experiences that are as wonderful and profound as the rapture "to the third heaven" should better wait "fourteen years" to be mentioned. It is most important that we pay attention to experience, but a mind that is filled with experience will make it more difficult for one to give up the self-life. I do not have "third heaven" experiences, and I have not received any great revelation; I have only received the grace from the Lord to learn in an incomplete way to follow Him in the small things in daily life. In this book I have merely tried to communicate to God's children what I have received from the Lord during these few years.

About four years ago I felt the need to write such a book. At that time, due to my physical weakness, I was resting, studying the Word, and praying in a little house by the lake. I felt the need for God's children to have a book based on scriptural teaching and spiritual experience, which would make a clear analysis of the spiritual life and would afford the Holy Spirit a way to guide the saints and lead them out of searching in darkness. At that time, I was very clear that the Lord had commissioned me to do this. As a result, I began to write the chapter on the difference between the spirit, the soul, and the body, the chapter concerning the flesh, and the half chapter on the soul-life. After a while, I stopped for a number of reasons, one of which was the fact that I was called to do other things. However, that alone could not have stopped me, because had I wanted to, I could still have found the time to write it. The greatest reason I stopped from further writing was that many of the truths which the Lord had commissioned me to write were not fully confirmed in my experience at that time. If I had written the book under such a condition, its value and power would have been diminished. I was willing to learn more and to confirm and experience His truths more, so that what I wrote would not be spiritual theories, but spiritual facts. This stopped the work for three years.

During these three years or more, I can say that the writing of this book was on my mind every day. Although to man, the publishing of this book is long overdue, I myself was most clear about the Lord's hand. During the past few years, the truths in this book—particularly those in Volume Three—have released many from the authority of darkness. This proves that we have seen the spiritual reality. The

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Lord has been particularly gracious to me to show me the goal of God's redemption and the way to differentiate between the new creation and the old creation. For this, I have to thank the Lord. The Lord has allowed me to travel more during these few years and has afforded me the opportunity to meet with some of the best of His children in various places. This, of course, increased my observation, knowledge, and experience. The Lord showed me in my contact with others the shortages among His children and the way of salvation revealed in the Bible. I can say to my readers that even though this book is a book that examines the spiritual life, all the points recorded in it can be proven in real experience.

Recently, due to the special experience which my physical body has undergone, I have come to realize, on the one hand, the reality of eternity, and on the other hand, my indebtedness to the church of God. Therefore, I began to wish that I could finish this book within the shortest possible time. I thank God the Father, and I also thank a few of my friends in the Lord, who have prepared a quiet place for me according to the need of my body. This allowed me to finish Sections One through Four within a few months. Although I have not yet started on the remaining sections, God the Father is always waiting for me when I need the grace. Now that this book is about to be published, I would say a few honest words: it was not an easy matter to learn the truths of this book, and it was more difficult to write about the truths of this book. During those two months, I can say that I was living between Satan's jaws. What a conflict that was! How much there was to withstand! All the strength of the spirit, the soul, and the body were hurled against Hades. Such warfare has temporarily ceased now. However, the remaining sections are not finished. May those who stood with Moses on the mount not forget Joshua on the plain. I know that the enemy deeply hates this book. He will try all he can to obstruct it and to stop people from getting it. Even when they get it, he will stop them from reading it. May the enemy not prevail in this matter.

Because of the thickness of the book, I have divided it into three volumes. Some parts of the book emphasize spiritual life, while others emphasize spiritual warfare. The parts that speak of spiritual warfare also speak of spiritual life, and the parts that speak of spiritual life also cover spiritual warfare. The only difference between them is the emphasis. Since the purpose of this book is to guide those who are lost, more attention is paid to the actual steps of the journey than to exhortations to take the journey. This book is not an exhortation to the pursuit of spiritual truths; rather, it is for those who are pursuing spiritual truths but who have not found the way. All those who have the desire will find the proper guidance. The style of this book is neither homiletic nor expository. There are variations in the degree of depth covered. One should take note of this fact while he is reading it.

I deeply believe that the spiritual conditions of the readers of this book will be very uneven. The degrees of spiritual life mentioned in this book are also quite varied from one section of the book to the other. Hence, if a reader comes across places that he does not understand or finds difficult to comprehend, he should not reject them and not try to research them with his mind; those truths are for those who are more mature. If he will read the book again after a while, perhaps after half a month or a month, he will find that he will understand more of them. In short, what this book talks about is absolutely a matter of spiritual life and spiritual experience, and no one can try to understand it by any method. What one considers as most common and unattractive may in the end turn out to be most precious. The point to which a person has reached is the degree to which he will understand. Does this then mean that a person can only understand something after he has reached that point? If that is the case, why is there the need for this book at all? There is a mystery in a believer's spiritual experience: for the Lord to lead a believer into a deeper spiritual life, He will first give such a one a taste of the

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outline of that level of spiritual life before actually leading him into it. When many believers first get the taste of a certain level of spirituality, they think that they have already attained to that level. Little do they realize that it is only the beginning of the Lord's work in leading them into such matters. Hence, when a believer has tasted a certain level but has not entered fully into it, he can take advantage of the teachings of this book.

We should beware of one thing in reading a book of this nature: we should not take the knowledge acquired from this book as a tool for self-analysis. If we see in God's light, we will have the knowledge of ourselves, and at the same time we will not lose our broadness in the Lord. But if we analyze all day long, we will be in our own thoughts and feelings. Such unrelenting self-analysis will hinder us from losing our self in Christ. Unless a believer has been deeply taught by the Lord, he will not know anything. All self-analysis and self-consciousness are harmful to the spiritual life.

Here, it would be well if we remember God's way of redemption. God's goal is to deliver us, through the new life which He gives to us at the time of our regeneration, from (1) sin, (2) natural things (our nature), and (3) supernatural things (the sinful aspects). All three steps of deliverance are indispensable. If a believer limits God's way of salvation and is satisfied only with victory over sin, he is short of God's will. The natural good nature must be overcome, and the supernatural enemy must also be overcome. It is good to overcome sin, but unless one overcomes the natural narrowness and the supernatural evil, he is not perfect. Such victory can only come from the cross. By God's grace I hope to pay more attention to these points, so that the readers will understand them.

Except the section in Volume Three which deals with the body, this book can be considered biblical psychology. All the things we cover are based on the Scripture and confirmed by our spiritual experience. The result of our study is that with every spiritual experience, such as regeneration, there are specific changes within our inner man. After we have studied this subject, we have found that the Bible divides a man into three parts: the spirit, the soul, and the body. Later on, we will consider the function of these three parts, in particular, the functions of the spirit and the soul. We will also see what each part includes and how they are different from one another.

A few special words are needed for Section One in Volume One. Knowledge of the distinction between the spirit and the soul and the different functions of the spirit and the soul is indispensable to spiritually-seeking believers. Only after one knows what the spirit is and what it is to be spiritual can he walk according to the spirit. Today this teaching is very much lacking in China, and that is why we cover the subject in detail in Section One. Those believers with a good amount of knowledge will not find it hard to understand. But those who are not familiar with this kind of distinction should just remember the conclusion for now, and should go on to read Section Two. The first section is not on the spiritual life but on the prerequisite knowledge for the spiritual life. One will understand more if he finishes the whole book first and then comes back to read that section.

There also needs to be a word of explanation concerning the translation of the Scripture in this book. I thank God that He has given us a very good translation, the Chinese Union Version. In many passages, it is even better than some of the English versions. However, in many places, due to Chinese grammar and usage, the translation is bound to vary from the original text. This is obviously a shortage when it comes to the study of the spiritual life. Whenever such places occur, I have to furnish my own translation. We are not concerned with the bluntness of the style; our aim is only to convey the spiritual meaning of the word.

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The teaching of the difference between the soul and the spirit did not originate with me. Andrew Murray said that the one thing the church, as well as individuals, has to dread the most is the inordinate activity of the soulish will and mind. F.B. Meyer also said that unless one knows how to differentiate between the soul and the spirit, he cannot imagine what his spiritual life would have been. Others such as Otto Stockmayer, Jessie Penn-Lewis, Evan Roberts, and Madame Guyon have given similar testimonies. Because we have received the same commission as they, I have freely quoted their writings. Because there are so many places where I have referenced them, I have not made specific reference to the sources.

This book is not only written for ordinary believers, but for those in the Lord's work who are younger than I am. Those who are responsible for leading others in their spiritual pursuits should be clear what we are leading others out of and what we are leading them into. We should know from where to where we are journeying. Does the Lord only want us to help others not to sin, on the negative side, and become zealous, on the positive side? Or is there something deeper than this? To me, the Bible is most clear concerning this point. God's goal is to lead His children fully out of the old creation and into the new creation. No matter how good the old creation looks in man's eyes, in God's eyes it is always condemned. If we the workers are clear what it is that we have to tear down and what it is that we have to build up, we will not lead others on in a foolish way.

Regeneration—the receiving of God's own life—is the beginning of all spiritual life. It is most useless to spend much energy in exhorting, persuading, debating, explaining, and researching and end up with nothing other than some understanding in the mind, some decisions in the will, and some activity in the emotion with nothing else being done to cause a person to receive God's life in his spirit. I wish all those who bear the same responsibility as I do in preaching God's Word would realize that unless we bring about a reception of God's life in man's deepest part, nothing is useful. If we know this, what a revolution there will be in our work. This will show us that many who claim that they have believed in the Lord Jesus have actually not yet believed in Him. Many tears and repentance and much good behavior, zeal, and work are not the characteristics of a Christian. If we know our responsibility, we will be satisfied with others receiving God's preeminent life.

Because of the limitation of space and subject material, many basic doctrines are only briefly covered here. If the Lord delays His coming, and if He allows me to remain on earth, I will be happy to put them in another book in the future. When I recall how the enemy tried to stop me from learning the truths in this book, especially those in Volume Three, I cannot help but realize that even if a believer has secured this book, Satan will stop him from reading it; and even if he reads it, Satan will cause him to forget it. Hence, I will warn the readers ahead of time that they should ask God to destroy Satan's work in frustrating them from reading this book. I hope that while they are reading it, they will pray as they read and will turn what they have read into prayer. We also ask that God put on you the helmet of salvation. Otherwise, you will either forget what you read, or your mind will be filled with endless theories.

A few more words for those brothers who have acquired the truths in this book: if God has given you the grace and has delivered you from the flesh and the power of darkness, you should preach these truths to others. Hence, after you have become familiar with this book and have received the truths in it, you should use this book as a textbook and should gather together a few believers and teach them the truths in this book. If the whole book is too much for them, you should at least teach them one or two sections. Do not let the truths of this book lie still. It is even a profitable work to lend this book to

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others to read.

Now I commit this little book into the Lord's hand. If it pleases Him, may He bless it so that my brothers and sisters will grow in spiritual life and overcome in spiritual warfare. May God's will be done, may the enemy's will be destroyed, and may the Lord Jesus come soon to reign. Amen.

The author

Shanghai, June 4, 1927

## POSTSCRIPT

Today I rejoice because I have finished the last section of this book. When I wrote the preface, I had only finished the first four sections. While I was writing the last four sections I felt that I still had much to say to my readers. Hence, this postscript.

Sixteen months ago I began writing this book. During these sixteen months, I have been burdened with this book every moment. The enemy is not happy when he sees God's truth being preached in this way. Therefore, attacks came from all angles, and it seemed as if they had become too much for me to handle. But thank the Lord that His grace sustained me until today. Many times I thought that there was no way to go on; the pressure in the spirit was too great, and the body was too weak. It was as if I had lost hope of my very life. But the God whom I serve and to whom I belong has strengthened me according to His promise and in answer to the prayers of many. Today everything is over, and my burden is released. What a consolation for me today!

Today I offer this book up with both hands to our God. My prayer before Him is that since He has finished what He has begun, He would bless this book for the accomplishment of His commission in His church. I pray that God would bless every one of the readers that they would find the proper path and would learn to follow the Lord unto perfection. My spirit and my prayer now go out with this book. May God use this book according to His excellent will.

Brothers, humanly speaking, a writer ought not to be too enthusiastic about his own book. But I cannot care about this. I am not drawing attention to it just because it is my book. Today we are here for the truth. If this book were written by someone else, I would have more liberty to recommend it. Therefore, I would ask for your forgiveness in this matter; I am compelled to do this. I only know that the truth in this book is important, and for that reason I cannot shy away from recommending it just because it was written by me. According to my understanding of God's will, I realize that the truth contained in this book is very much needed in this age. I may be mistaken, but one thing is sure: I know that I did not initiate the writing of this book. I was clearly commissioned by the Lord to do it. Moreover, the truths in this book are not mine but are given to me by Him. Even while I was writing this book, He gave me many new blessings.

I want my readers to fully understand that this book is not on theories of spiritual life and warfare. I myself can testify that the truths contained in this book were learned through many sufferings, trials, and failures. Almost all the teachings have the mark of fire on them. The words were not written lightly but were produced out of the deepest part of my being. God knows where these truths come from.

Those who read this book will naturally feel that its style is different from ordinary writings. In addition, there are many special terms which are quite incomprehensible. Let me clarify a few points. If

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a man has never set out to write a book like this, he will not realize in reality how many difficulties there are. It is when he takes up his pen and starts writing that all these problems come before him. The Chinese language does not lend itself easily to spiritual writings. For this reason, I have to express the meaning of the truth in a style that is half Chinese and half foreign. Many terms in the book were created by me. Had I not done this, many truths could not even have been expressed. I hope that the readers will pay special attention to the proper spiritual terms. After they are more widely used, they will not sound that strange anymore. I thank the Lord that during the past few years, many spiritual terms have become common among Chinese believers and can be understood without much explanation. I hope that the readers will not find difficulty with this category of terms.

When I wrote this book, I did not try to group the same kind of truths in the same place. The reason for this is that I could only mention the different truths as I went along. Although some truths fall under the same category as others, I could only postpone them for later discussions. Many times, because of the importance of some subjects, I have mentioned them repeatedly, hoping that God's children will have a deep impression of them. I deeply feel that believers today forget easily. For this reason, I cannot help but mention these matters again and again at the appropriate times so that they will not be lost. Many people receive a truth only after repeated reminders. "Therefore Jehovah's word to them will be:/Rule upon rule, rule upon rule;/Line upon line, line upon line;/Here a little, there a little" (Isa. 28:13).

I also realize that many places in this book appear to contradict one another. When readers come to these places, they should realize that in actuality, there are no contradictions; they only appear to be so. Because this book concerns things in the spiritual realm, many theories appear to be contradictory. Actually, in experience, they complement one another. Many spiritual things appear to be contradictory (2 Cor. 4:8-9). I admit that in many places, they appear to be incomprehensible. But my request is that you try your best to understand, and not to misunderstand. If anyone tries purposely to misunderstand, he may find some things in this book which I never intended to say.

I deeply feel that only one kind of person can understand this book. My original intention for writing this book was to meet the need of many believers. Therefore, only those believers who have a need will understand this book. Those with a need will find this book to be a guide. If a reader has no need, he will either consider its content to be theoretical or will criticize it. The amount of need determines the amount of understanding of this book. If a reader does not have any need in his experience, this book will not solve anything for him and will only serve as an object for idle criticism. Hence, the readers should take note of this point.

The more profound a truth is, the easier it is to become a theory, because the more profound a truth is, the more difficult it is to attain to it without the operation of the Holy Spirit. Once a person fails to attain to it, he will consider it a theory. Therefore, when we read a book like this, we have to be careful lest we receive its teachings in the mind only, thinking that we have acquired everything. This is most dangerous. If we do this, we will be more deceived by the flesh and the evil spirit day after day.

The reader of this book should also be careful that he does not take the knowledge he has acquired from this book as a tool for criticizing others. It is easy for us to say that this person is soulish and that person is fleshly. But it is difficult to know if we ourselves are the same. The truth is given to set men free; it is not given to criticize others. I am afraid that some who are naturally inclined to show themselves off will not change after receiving the truth in this book, but will use the truth in this book to criticize their brothers and sisters. This book is meant to lead men on the right path; it is not meant to

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judge men. If we do this, it means that we are no less soulish than the ones we criticize, only a bit more fleshly. This danger is the greatest, and we should guard against it carefully.

I have mentioned one thing in my preface, which, due to its extreme importance, I would like to mention again here. This concerns the warning that we should never analyze ourselves. After reading a book of this nature, it would be very easy for us to unconsciously have excessive self-analysis. When we pay attention to the inner life, we tend to be lead into excessive analysis of our own thoughts and feelings and the activities of the inner man. In this way, we may advance much outwardly, but in reality, the self-life will become more difficult to reject. If we turn inward exclusively, we will lose all peace. When we expect to see holiness filling us, yet find that our condition is not as we have expected, we will naturally feel uneasy. God has no intention that we engage ourselves in such introspection. This is the cause of spiritual lethargy. Our rest comes from looking to the Lord alone and not to ourselves. The amount we look to the Lord is the amount of deliverance we will receive. We rest on the accomplished work of the Lord Jesus and not on our volatile experience. Real spiritual life depends not on continuous analysis of our own feelings and thoughts but on looking away to the Savior!

The readers must not be misled to think that all supernatural things are to be rejected. My purpose is only to help you test if these things are from God. I firmly believe that many supernatural things are from God, and I have seen many of these things. However, I must also admit that there are many supernatural things that are falsely claimed to be from God. I do not have the slightest intention that men would reject everything supernatural. I am merely pointing out the basic difference in principle between these two things in their manifestations. If a believer encounters supernatural things, he should test them carefully according to the scripturally revealed principles before he makes the decision to accept or reject them.

Concerning the problem with the soul, I feel that many believers often drift from one extreme to the other. We commonly consider it to be soulish when one is too emotional, and we think that to be soulish is to be emotional. For this reason, we label the emotional and easily-excited ones as soulish. But we have to realize that an intellectual person is not spiritual either. We are acutely aware of the fact that many people have taken the intellectual life to mean the spiritual life. This is another thing that we have to be aware of.

We must never allow the activity of our soul to cease completely. It is very easy for us to fall into extremes. Either we fall into one extreme, or we fall into the other extreme. At one time we might have considered the emotion and the excitement in the soul to be good and might have walked according to them. Now that we know they are wrong, we begin to suppress them and to restrict their activities. This sounds good, but such actions do not make us spiritual. I deeply feel that if the readers of this book have but a very slight misunderstanding concerning this point, their life will become very dead, for their spirit will then be imprisoned by their dead emotion, and will not have the opportunity to express itself. If excitement is an expression of the spirit's feeling, it is most valuable. In short, if a believer over-suppresses his emotion, he will only become a person living in his mentality and will not be a spiritual person.

I have a few words to say particularly about the last section. It seems that I am not worthy to write it because of the weakness of my body. But precisely because my weakness, sickness, and sufferings are more than others', I can write about them in more detail. Many times I did not have the boldness to write. But thank the Lord that eventually I wrote it. I hope that those whose experience with their

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earthly tabernacle is similar to mine will accept what I have written and take it as light from a brother who has seen light in his darkness. Of course, believers today have many contentions about the matter of divine healing. A book such as this one on the teaching of principles should indeed not engage in any debate with the brothers and sisters concerning the fine points. I have said what I wanted to say. My request now is that in our sickness we should differentiate between the things that come from ourselves and the things that come from God. As to the rest, I do not like to say too much.

I confess that this book has many deficiencies. However, I have done my best. I have offered to you my best. I know how solemn the consequence of releasing this book is. For that reason, I have no other prayer except that, in fear and trembling, I would ask God to bring us through all the experience. Now that the book is completed, I would commend what I have written to the conscience of God's children and leave it up to them to discern and to judge.

I know that such a book that exposes the enemy's tactics will surely stir up the hatred of the power of darkness and will subsequently raise up much opposition. But my purpose in writing this book is not to please men. Hence, none of these things will affect me. I also know that some of God's remnant will be helped by this book and will consider me more highly than I should be considered. May I say this to these ones: I am a man only and a very weak one indeed. The teachings in this book can testify to my experience of weakness.

Now this book is in the hand of the readers. This is God's grace. If you have the courage and the patience to go on after reading Section One, God will perhaps bless you with the truth contained in it. If you read through the whole book, I would advise you to read it one more time after a while. Dear friends, at this point, while you are reading these lines, may we lift up our heads to our Father, and may we come to Him once again in faith, casting ourselves into His bosom and receiving from Him His life once more. May we confess anew that we are nothing and that with Him is the fullness. We have nothing, and He has all. Unless He gives, and unless He graces us and fills us, we remain helpless sinners. Let us praise Him with a heart of thanksgiving for the grace that the Lord Jesus has bestowed on us.

O holy Father, what You have entrusted to me is now here. If You see fit, bless it! But may You preserve Your children in this end time and deliver them from the corrupted flesh and the wicked evil spirits. Father, build up the Body of Your Son, destroy the enemy of Your Son, and hasten the coming of His kingdom! Father God, I look to You! I trust in You! I long for You! I trust in You!

The author  
Shanghai, June 25, 1928

## **A TABLE OF IMPORTANT WORDS CONCERNING THE SPIRIT, THE SOUL, AND THE BODY**

The spirit and soul mentioned in this book, and their respective functions, are important matters. What we have covered is but an outline of these subjects; there are still many areas which we have not covered. Because there are many important [Greek] words which are not translated uniformly into the same Chinese words in the Chinese Union Version, which of course is often impossible to do, it

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becomes impossible for those who desire to search more finely into the question but who are ignorant of the original language to grasp the subject. For the sake of accommodating these brothers, we have listed a table here to point out the different Chinese translations in our [Union Version] Bible of the same word in the original language, so that for each Chinese word the readers can see the corresponding word in the original language.

## SPIRIT

The word "spirit" is ruach in Hebrew in the Old Testament and pneuma in Greek in the New Testament. These two words are used about seven hundred times. Of these, about half of them refer to the Holy Spirit and the evil spirits. About a hundred times, especially ruach in the Old Testament, the word is used in reference to the wind. Once ruach is translated "quarters" (1 Chron. 9:24), and six times it is translated "side" (Jer. 52:23; Ezek. 42:16-20). All other times it refers to the highest part of man, the spirit. For simplicity's sake, we will only list here the verses concerning man's spirit.

[The list on the spirit is omitted.]

## SOUL

The word "soul" in Hebrew in the Old Testament is nephesh, which in Greek in the New Testament is psuche. These two words are used about eight hundred times in the Old and the New Testaments.

[The list on the soul is omitted.]

## FLESH

The word "flesh" in the Old Testament Hebrew is basar, and in the New Testament Greek it is sarx. The word is used about four hundred times.

[The list on the flesh is omitted.]

## HEART

The word "heart" in the Old Testament Hebrew is leb, and in the New Testament Greek it is kardia. This word is used about seven hundred times.

[The list on the heart is omitted.]

## NOUS

The word "mind" in Greek is nous, which is used over twenty times in the New Testament.

[The list on the nous is omitted.]

## MIND

There are a few words in the original languages which refer to the mind, intellect, and thoughts. We

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cannot enumerate them all here. However, when a reader finds out that a word should not be translated as spirit, soul, or heart, and is not nous, it is possible that the word refers to the mind.

## **SECTION ONE**

### **AN INTRODUCTION CONCERNING THE SPIRIT, THE SOUL, AND THE BODY**

#### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### **THE SPIRIT, THE SOUL, AND THE BODY**

Most men today consider man as being made up of two parts: the soul and the body. The soul is the invisible part, the psychological part within man, and the body is the visible part, the outward form of man. This is man's fallen concept. Although there is some ground to it, it is not accurate. Outside of God's revelation, no ideas in this world are reliable. It is, of course, true that the body is the outward shell of man. But the Bible never mixes the soul with the spirit or considers the two as the same thing. In addition to being different terms, the soul and the spirit are actually two different substances; they are not the same. The Word of God has not divided man into two parts, the soul and the body. Rather, it has divided man into three parts: the spirit, the soul, and the body. First Thessalonians 5:23 says, "The God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete." This verse clearly divides a person into three parts: the spirit, the soul, and the body. Here the apostle mentioned the believers' being sanctified "wholly." This means that the whole being of the believers is to be sanctified. What did he mean when he said that a person is to be sanctified wholly? He meant that a person's spirit, soul, and body are to be preserved complete. This is very clear; a complete person has a spirit, a soul, and a body. This verse also tells us clearly that there is a distinction between the spirit and the soul. Otherwise, it would not have said "your spirit and soul." Instead, it would have said "your spirit-soul." Since God has spoken this, we can see that there is a distinction between man's spirit and his soul, and from this we can conclude that man is composed of three parts: spirit, soul, and body.

What is the significance of distinguishing the spirit from the soul? There is a great significance. It has much to do with the spiritual life of the believers. If believers do not know the boundary of their spirits, how can they understand the spiritual life? If they do not understand the spiritual life, how can they grow in their spiritual living? Because believers are either negligent or ignorant of the distinction between the spirit and the soul, they never grow in their spiritual life. Moreover, many times they take something soulish as spiritual, constantly remain in a soulish living, and do not seek after spiritual things. If we mix up what God has separated, we are bound to suffer loss.

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Spiritual knowledge has much to do with the spiritual life. But the most important thing is whether or not a believer is willing to be humble and to receive the teaching of the Holy Spirit. If he is, the Holy Spirit will, in his experience, separate his soul from his spirit, though he may not even have the knowledge about this truth. A believer with very little knowledge concerning the distinction between the soul and the spirit can experience the difference between the two. On the other hand, a very knowledgeable believer may be well acquainted with the truth about the distinction between the soul and the spirit, and yet be without any experience at all. It is best that one has both the knowledge as well as the experience. Most believers are lacking in the experience. This is why it is good to let them know the different functions of the soul and the spirit so that they will seek after spiritual things.

Not only does 1 Thessalonians divide man into three parts; other passages in the Scripture do the same. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Here the apostle divided the non-physical elements of man into two parts, the soul and the spirit, and he considered the physical part of man to include the joints and the marrow, which correspond to the mind and will. Just as a priest divided up a whole sacrifice and cut it apart with a knife so that nothing remained hidden, in the same way the Lord Jesus divides those who belong to Him, through the word of God; He pierces and divides every part, whether it be the spiritual, the soulish, or the physical. Since the soul and the spirit can be divided, the two must not be the same thing. Hence, this portion of the Word also considers man to be composed of three elements: the spirit, the soul, and the body.

Because the versions of the Bible we ordinarily use do not follow a literal translation of the words "spirit" and "soul" in a strict way, readers find it difficult to differentiate between the two just by looking at the translated words. In translating the Bible, we should translate these words literally. When men in the world translate books, they invent many new terms. Why cannot the translation of the most widely circulated Book do the same? Since God has used two different terms for the spirit and the soul, we should not confuse them.

## **THE CREATION OF MAN**

Genesis 2:7 says, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." In the beginning, God created the figure of a man with the dust of the earth and then breathed into his nostrils "the breath of life." When the breath of life came in contact with man's body, the soul was produced. The soul is the consummation of man's body and his spirit. This is why the Bible calls man "a living soul." This "breath of life" is man's spirit, the source of man's life. The Lord Jesus tells us that "it is the Spirit who gives life" (John 6:63). This breath of life comes from the Creator. Yet we should not confuse this spirit, which is the "breath of life," with the Holy Spirit of God. There is a difference between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit. Romans 8:16 shows us that the spirit of man is different from the Holy Spirit; the two are not the same. "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God." The word "life" in the expression "the breath of life" is chay; it is plural in number. This tells us that God's breathing produces two lives, a spiritual one and a soulish one. This means that when God's breath of life entered the human body, it became the spirit. At the same time, when this spirit came in contact with the body, it produced the soul. This is the source of the two lives, the spiritual life and the soulish life, within us. But we should make a distinction here: this spirit is not the life of God Himself; it is merely "the breath

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of the Almighty [which] hath given me life" (Job 33:4). It is not the entrance of the uncreated life of God into man. The spirit that was received in the beginning is not the life of God that we received at the time of our regeneration. The life which we received at the time of our regeneration is the life of God Himself; it is the life represented by the tree of life. This spirit of man is eternal, but it does not have the "eternal life."

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." This refers to man's body. "And breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." This refers to the fact that man's spirit comes from God. This man then became "a living soul." This speaks of man's soul. When the spirit caused the body to come alive, man became a living soul, a living person with his own consciousness. A complete person is a tripartite being, a person with a spirit, a soul, and a body. According to this verse, man was created with two independent materials—spirit and body. When the spirit entered the body, the soul was produced. The soul is the result of the union of the spirit and the body. The body was dead, but when it met the spirit of life, a third entity was produced, the soul. Without the spirit, the body is dead. When the spirit came, the body became alive. When the spirit is in the body, something organic is produced. This something that is organic is called the soul.

Here it says that the man became "a living soul." This signifies not only that the soul is produced from the union between the spirit and the body, but that after the soul is produced from this union of the spirit and the body, both the spirit and the body are incorporated into the soul. In other words, the soul and the body are fully joined to the spirit, and the spirit and the body are incorporated into the soul. Before Adam fell, his spirit and his flesh were of course not in conflict with each other daily as it is with us today. The three elements of his being were fully in harmony one with another. These three were mingled together. The soul served as the linking chain, the seat of man's personality, making it possible for man to exist independently. The soul is the consummation of the spirit and the body, the totality of the elements within man. After man's spirit and body were fully integrated, man became a living soul. This soul is the very result of the union of the two things; it is man's own personality. We may consider an incomplete illustration: if we put a drop of ink into a cup of water, the ink and the water mingle together and become ink-water. You can say that it is ink; it is indeed ink. You can also say that it is water, for it is still water. The ink and the water are integrated together and have become a third thing—ink-water. (Of course, the soul produced from the union of the spirit and the body is an independent and insoluble element, just as the spirit and the body are.) In the same way, the spirit and the body were two independent elements, but after they combined, the combination became a living soul.

God characterizes man by his soul because in His creation man's characteristics lie in his soul. This is similar to the angels being characterized by their spirit. Man is not only a body, and he is not only a body with the breath of life, but he has become a living soul. This is why later on in the Bible we see God calling man a "soul"; He did not call man a man, but He called him a soul. The reason for this is that a man is judged by his soul. The soul represents the man and expresses the characteristics of his personality. The soul is the organ of man's free will, and both the spirit and the body are incorporated into it. It has a free will. If it chooses to obey God, it can make the spirit the master of everything, according to God's design. But it can also suppress the spirit and take as its master the part that it likes. The three things—the spirit, the soul, and the body—are like a lighted electric bulb. Within a bulb, there is the electricity, the filament, and the light. The body is like the filament, the spirit is like the electricity, and the soul is like the light. Electricity is the source of light, and light is the consequence of electricity. The filament is a physical material for conducting electricity and for emitting the light.

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When the spirit and the body combine together, they produce the soul. The soul bears the characteristics of the combination of the spirit and the body; it is the product of the union of the two things. The spirit is the motivating force behind the soul, while the body is the means to express the soul. This is like electricity being the source of light, while the filament is the means through which light shines.

However, we should clearly remember that in this life the soul is man's consummate expression, while in the next life and in resurrection the spirit will be man's consummate expression. This is why the Bible says, "It is sown a soulish body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44). Since we are now joined to the resurrected Lord, through Him the spirit can control our whole being. We can control our being because we are not joined to the first man Adam, who was a living soul, but to the last Adam, who is the life-giving Spirit.

## **THE FUNCTIONS OF THE SPIRIT, THE SOUL, AND THE BODY**

The body is the "world-consciousness," the soul is the "self-consciousness," and the spirit is the "God-consciousness." There are five organs in the body which afford man the five senses. This physical body enables man to communicate with the physical world. This is why it is called the "world-consciousness." The soul comprises that part in man known as the intellect, which makes man's existence possible. The part of love generates affections toward other human beings or objects. Affections originate from the senses. All these are parts of man himself; they form the personality of man. Hence, they are called the "self-consciousness." The spirit is the part with which man communicates with God. With this part man worships God, serves Him, and understands his relationship with God. Hence, it is called "God-consciousness." Just as God dwells in the spirit, the self dwells in the soul, and the senses dwell in the body.

The soul is the meeting point; here the spirit and the body join. Man communicates with God's Spirit and the spiritual realm through the spirit and receives and expresses power and life in the spiritual realm through this spirit. He communicates with the outside world of senses through the body; the world and the body interact with one another. The soul lies in between these two worlds and belongs to these two worlds. On the one hand, it communicates with the spiritual realm through the spirit, and on the other hand, it communicates with the physical world through the body. The soul has the power of self-determination; it can make decisions concerning the things related to it in the environment and can choose or reject them. It is impossible for the spirit to control the body directly; it requires a medium. This medium is the soul, which was produced when the spirit touched the body. The soul is in between the spirit and the body; it binds the spirit and the body together as one. The spirit can rule over the body through the soul and subject it under God's power. The body can also induce the spirit through the soul to love the world.

Among the three elements of man, the spirit is joined to God and is the highest. The body is in contact with the material world and is the lowest. In between the two is the soul. It takes as its nature the nature of the other two. As such it becomes the linkage of the other two parts. Through the soul the two parts can fellowship with each other and can work together. The function of the soul is to maintain the spirit and the body in their proper order so that they will not lose their proper relationship with one another. In this way, the body, which is the lowest, will submit to the spirit, and the spirit, which is the highest,

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will be able to control the body through the soul. The soul is indeed the chief element in man. The soul looks to the spirit for the supply which the latter has received from the Holy Spirit and communicates to the body what it has received so that the body may partake of the perfection of the Holy Spirit and become a spiritual body.

Man's spirit is the noblest part of man; it dwells in man's innermost part. The body is the lowest and remains outside. The soul dwells between the spirit and the body and is the medium of the two. The body is the outer shell of the soul, while the soul is the outer shell of the spirit. When the spirit tries to control the body, it has to do so with the help of the intermediary soul. Before man fell, it was the spirit (through the soul) that controlled the whole being. When the spirit wanted to do something, it communicated to the soul, and the soul activated the body to follow the order of the spirit. This is what it means for the soul to be the medium.

The soul is potentially the strongest part because both the spirit and the body are incorporated into it, take it as their personality, and are affected by it. But in the beginning, man had not sinned, and the power of the soul was fully under the control of the spirit. Hence, the power of the soul was the power of the spirit. The spirit could not drive the body by itself; it had to do so through the soul. We can see this from Luke 1:46-47: "My soul magnifies [present tense] the Lord, and my spirit has exulted [perfect tense] in God my Savior." Here we see the change in tense according to the original language, which indicates that the spirit must first exult before the soul can magnify the Lord. The spirit first communicates the exultation to the soul, then the soul expresses this exultation through the organs of the body.

In conclusion, the soul is the seat of personality; man's will, intellect, and emotion all lie in the soul. The spirit is the part with which man communicates with the spiritual realm. The body is the part with which man communicates with the physical realm. The soul is in the middle of these two parts. It exercises its judgment to determine if the spiritual realm is to rule or if the physical realm is to rule. Sometimes the soul rules through its intellect and senses; when that happens, the psychological world rules. Unless the soul yields its rule to the spirit, the spirit cannot rule. Hence, the soul has to authorize the spirit to rule before the latter can rule over the soul and the whole body. The reason for this is that the soul is the origin of man's personality.

The soul is the master of a person because man's will is part of the soul. When the spirit controls the whole being, it is because the soul has yielded itself and has taken a lower position. If the soul rebels, the spirit will not have the power to control it. This is the meaning of "free will" in man. Man has the absolute right to make his own decisions. He is not a machine which turns according to God's will. He has his own faculty of deliberation. He can choose to obey God's will, and he can choose to oppose God's will and to follow the devil's will. According to God's arrangement, the spirit should be the highest part and should control the whole being. Yet the main part of man's personality, the will, is of the soul. Man's will (soul) has the power to choose to let the spirit rule, to let the body rule, or to let the self rule. Because the soul is so powerful, the Bible calls it "a living soul."

## **THE TEMPLE AND MAN**

The apostle said in 1 Corinthians 3:16, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" After reading this verse, we can see that the apostle was inspired to consider man a temple. Just as God dwelt in the temple in time past, in the same way the Holy Spirit

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dwells in the believers. The Bible compares man to the temple. In doing so it depicts the three elements of man most conspicuously.

We know that the temple is divided into three parts. The first part is the outer court, which everyone can see and into which everyone can go. All outward worship is offered to God here. Further in, there is the Holy Place. Here, only the priests can enter. In the Holy Place the priests offer the blood, the oil, the incense, and the bread to God. Although they are very close, they are not the closest, because they are still outside the veil and cannot enter into God's presence. God dwells in the Holy of Holies from which He radiates His infinite glory. The Holy of Holies is otherwise dark. No one can come before Him. Although the high priest is allowed once a year to enter the Holy of Holies, this only demonstrates all the more that before the rending of the veil there was no one within the veil.

Man is a temple of God. Within man there are also three parts. The body is like the outer court; it is outside, and its life is seen by all. It is here that man should obey all God's commandments. It is also here that God's Son died for man. Further in, there is man's soul, which is the inward life in man; it includes man's feelings, will, and mind. This is the Holy Place to a regenerated one. His love, thoughts, and desires are all here. In this place there is much light, everything is clear and obvious, and the priests come in and out to serve God. However, further in, there is the Holy of Holies behind the veil, which is unreachable by human light and is a place invisible to the human eyes. This is "the secret place of the Most High" (Psa. 91:1). It is the habitation of God, a place that no man can reach unless God removes the veil. This is the human spirit. Man not only has a body and a soul but a spirit as well. This spirit is deeper than man's consciousness; it is the place unreachable by man's feelings. It is in this place that man fellowships with God.

In the Holy of Holies there is no light, for this is God's habitation. In the Holy Place there is light because there is the lampstand with seven branches. In the outer court everything is exposed under the sun. This is a picture of a regenerated person. His spirit is like the Holy of Holies, where God dwells. This place is entered by faith and is totally dark. This is a place which the believer cannot see, feel, or understand. The soul is like the Holy Place, where there is much power of understanding, many thoughts, much knowledge, and many rules and where one comprehends both the things in the psychological world and the things in the physical world. In this place there is the shining of the lampstand. The body is like the outer court; it is seen by all. All its activities and living are visible to everyone.

The order that God gives to us can never be wrong. It is: "spirit and soul and body" (1 Thes. 5:23). It is not "soul and spirit and body," nor is it "body and soul and spirit." Rather, it is "spirit and soul and body." The spirit is the noblest; hence, it is mentioned first. The body is the lowest; hence, it is mentioned last. The soul lies in between; hence, it is placed in between the soul and the body. After we have clearly seen God's order, we will see the wisdom God has in comparing man to the temple. We see how the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, and the outer court correspond with the order and the degree of importance of the spirit, the soul, and the body.

The work of the temple revolves around the revelation in the Holy of Holies. All the actions in the outer court and the Holy Place are determined by the presence of God in the Holy of Holies. The holiest place within the temple and the place which all other places are subject to and depend on is the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies there does not seem to be much work; it is very dark. All the activities are in the Holy Place. All the works in the outer court are controlled by the priests in the Holy

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Place. Indeed the Holy of Holies is a quiet and still place. Yet all the activities of the Holy Place are directed by the inspiration of the Holy of Holies.

The spiritual significance of this is not difficult to understand. The soul is the organ of our personality. It includes the mind, the will, the emotion, etc. The soul appears to be the master of the activities of the whole being. Even the body is under its direction. Yet before man fell, although there were many activities and works with the soul, they were all under the control of the spirit. God's order is: (1) the spirit, (2) the soul, and (3) the body.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE SPIRIT AND THE SOUL**

#### **THE SPIRIT**

It is very important for believers to know that they have a spirit. Further on, we will see that all communications between God and man lie within this spirit. If a believer does not know what his spirit is, he will not know how to fellowship with God in the spirit and will substitute the work of the spirit with soulish activities such as that of the mind and the emotion. The result of this is that he will always remain soulish and will not reach the spiritual realm.

First Corinthians 2:11 speaks of the spirit of man which is in him.

First Corinthians 5:4 speaks of "my spirit."

Romans 8:16 speaks of "our spirit."

First Corinthians 14:14 again speaks of "my spirit."

First Corinthians 14:32 speaks of "the spirits of prophets."

Proverbs 25:28 mentions of one's own spirit.

Hebrews 12:23 mentions the spirits of righteous men.

Zechariah 12:1 mentions Jehovah forming the spirit of man within him.

These few verses adequately prove to us that man has a spirit. This spirit is not our soul and is not the Holy Spirit. We worship God by this spirit.

According to the teaching of the Bible and the experience of the believers, man's spirit is composed of three parts, or it has three functions. These three parts are man's conscience, intuition, and fellowship (that is, fellowship with God, which is the same as worship).

The conscience is the discerning organ. The discernment of right and wrong by the conscience is not influenced by the knowledge in the mind; rather, it is a spontaneous, direct judgment. Many times the

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conscience will condemn even the things that one's reasoning condones. The work of the conscience is mostly independent and direct; it is not affected by outward persuasions. If a man makes a mistake in his conduct, his conscience will condemn him. The intuition is the consciousness within man's spirit. This consciousness is absolutely different from the body-consciousness and the soul-consciousness. The reason it is called intuition is that this consciousness is direct and is not dependent on anything else. We do not need the help of the mind, the emotion, or the will before we can have this knowledge. This knowledge comes directly from intuition. Through his intuition, man can truly "know" something, while his mind can only make him understand it. All God's revelations and all the moving of the Holy Spirit are known by the believers through the intuition. A believer should follow the voice of the conscience and the instruction of the intuition. Fellowship is our worship to God. The mind, the emotion, and the will are the organs of the soul and cannot worship God. God does not come through our mind, emotion, or desires. God is known directly through the spirit. Man worships God and communicates with God directly through the spirit, that is, through the "inner man," and not through the soul or the outward man.

Having seen the above, we now realize how the three parts—the conscience, the intuition, and the fellowship—are deeply integrated together and how they are related to one another in their work. The conscience is linked to the intuition, for the conscience judges according to the intuition. The conscience condemns conduct that is contrary to the intuition. The intuition is also linked to fellowship, or worship. God is known to man in the intuition, and He reveals Himself and His will through the intuition. Hopes and conjectures will not bring us the knowledge of God. Further on, we will discuss these matters in detail. Therefore, we will not say too much about them now.

The spirit contains the function of the conscience, although this does not mean that the spirit is the conscience. We can see this from the following verses:

"For Jehovah your God hardened his spirit" (Deut. 2:30).

"Jehovah...saves those who are contrite in spirit" (Psa. 34:18).

"Renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psa. 51:10).

"When Jesus had said these things, He became troubled in His spirit" (John 13:21).

"His spirit was provoked within him as he beheld that the city was full of idols" (Acts 17:16).

"For you have not received a spirit of slavery bringing you into fear again" (Rom. 8:15).

"The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16).

"For I,...present in the spirit, have already judged, as if being present, him who has thus done this" (1 Cor. 5:3).

"I had no rest in my spirit" (2 Cor. 2:13).

"For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice" (2 Tim. 1:7).

The spirit has the function of intuition, or consciousness. We can see this from the following verses:

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"The spirit is willing" (Matt. 26:41).

"Jesus, knowing fully in His spirit" (Mark 2:8).

"And He groaned deeply in His spirit" (Mark 8:12).

"Jesus...was moved with indignation in His spirit" (John 11:33).

"This man...being fervent in spirit" (Acts 18:25).

"I am going bound in the spirit to Jerusalem" (Acts 20:22).

"For who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him?" (1 Cor. 2:11).

"For they refreshed my spirit and yours" (1 Cor. 16:18).

"Because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you" (2 Cor. 7:13).

The spirit has the function of fellowship, or worship. We can see this from the following verses:

"And my spirit has exulted in God my Savior" (Luke 1:47).

"The true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truthfulness" (John 4:23).

"For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit" (Rom. 1:9).

"We serve in newness of spirit" (Rom. 7:6).

"You have received a spirit of sonship in which we cry, Abba, Father!" (Rom. 8:15).

"The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit" (Rom. 8:16).

"But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17).

"I will pray with the spirit" (1 Cor. 14:15).

"If you bless with the spirit" (1 Cor. 14:16).

"And he carried me away in spirit" (Rev. 21:10).

From these verses we see that the spirit includes at least three parts—the conscience, the intuition, and the fellowship. Although an unregenerated person has not received life, he still has his conscience, intuition, and fellowship. Of course, under such circumstances he worships only the evil spirits. With some, the manifestation of the spirit is more, while with others, the manifestation of the spirit is less. But this does not mean that a person is not dead in his trespasses and sins before he is regenerated. The Bible does not consider a person saved just because his conscience is active, his intuition is sharp, and he has a spiritual inclination and interest. These things alone only demonstrate that man has a spirit and that this spirit is something different from the intellect, emotion, and will in his soul. Before a man is regenerated, his spirit is isolated from the life of God. It is only after he is regenerated that God's life and the Holy Spirit begin to live in his spirit and enliven it to become the instrument of the Holy Spirit.

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The reason we study the main features of the spirit is to show that man has a spirit which is independent of his other parts. This spirit is not man's mind, will, or emotion. It includes the function of the conscience, the intuition, and the fellowship. Here, God regenerates us and instructs us and leads us into His rest. Because the believers have long been controlled by the soul, they have become very weak in their knowledge of the spirit. We should come before God in fear and trembling and should ask Him to show us in our experience what is of the spirit and what is of the soul.

Before a person is regenerated, his spirit is deeply submerged within his soul. It is surrounded by his soul and is knit together with his soul. In this way, the functions and the consciousness of the spirit are mingled with the soul, and the person cannot distinguish what comes from the soul and what comes from the spirit. In addition, because the main functions of the spirit towards God are lost and dead, they have become accessories to the soul. When the functions of the mind, emotion, and will in the soul become strong, the functions of the spirit become obliterated. Hence, even after a believer is regenerated, there is still the need for the work of dividing the soul from the spirit. If we search the Scripture (which we will do shortly), we will find out that the spirit of an unregenerated person seems to do the same work as that of his soul. The following verses prove this:

"And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled" (Gen. 41:8).

"Then their anger [lit., spirit] was abated toward him" (Judg. 8:3).

"He that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly" (Prov. 14:29).

"A broken spirit drieth the bones" (Prov. 17:22).

"A fool uttereth all his mind [lit., spirit]" (Prov. 29:11).

"Those who have erred in spirit will come to understand" (Isa. 29:24).

"And because of a broken spirit you shall wail" (Isa. 65:14).

"For I know the things that come into your mind [lit., spirit]" (Ezek. 11:5).

"And that which cometh into your mind [lit., spirit] shall not be at all" (Ezek. 20:32).

"But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so arrogant" (Dan. 5:20).

The above few verses show us the function of the spirit of an unregenerated person. We can see how close these functions are to the functions of the soul. The purpose of these verses in saying that the spirit behaves in this way, instead of saying that the soul behaves this way, is to highlight the condition of these ones in the deepest part of their being. The spirits of these people are controlled and affected by their mind. This is why the spirit performs the functions of the soul. Nevertheless, the spirits of these ones are still there, and these functions are still from their spirits. A man does not lose the organ of the spirit and does not cause the spirit to disappear just because his soul has taken control.

## THE SOUL

In addition to the spirit, the organ with which he communicates with God, man also has a soul. This soul is where man's own consciousness lies. Man is conscious of his own existence because of the

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activity of the soul. The soul is the organ of man's personality. Everything included in man's personality, that is, every element that constitutes him a man, is a part of the soul. His intellect, mind, ideals, love, stimulations, judgment, will, etc., are all parts of the soul.

We have said that the spirit and the body are merged into the soul. That is why the soul becomes man's personality and the center of his being. For this reason the Bible calls man "a soul," as if man has nothing but a soul. For example, Genesis 12:5 speaks of the souls that went forth from Haran. When Jacob brought his household down to Egypt, the Bible says that "all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten" (46:27). There are many other instances like these in the original language, where "soul" is used to denote persons. The reason for this is that the soul is the location of man's personality and the chief element of his personality. The way a man behaves is governed by his personality. A man's existence, characteristics, and life all come from his soul. Hence, the Bible calls man a soul.

The three main elements included in a man's personality are his will, his mind, and his emotion. The will is the deliberating organ; it is where the power of judgment lies. It makes decisions on whether or not one will do something and whether or not one wants something. Without the will, man would be a machine. The mind is the thinking organ; it is our intellect. Our intelligence, knowledge, and everything that has to do with our mental capacity come from the mind. Without the mind, man would become totally foolish. The emotion is the organ of love, hatred, and sentiments. We can love and hate and feel joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness through our emotion. Without the emotion, a man would be senseless like wood and stone. If we study the Bible carefully, we will find that the three main elements of man's personality belong to the soul. They are all parts of the soul. Because there are too many verses, we will just quote a few to serve as illustrations.

The soul includes the will:

"Do not give me over/To the desire [lit., soul] of my adversaries" (Psa. 27:12).

"Do not give him over to the desire [lit., soul] of his enemies" (Psa. 41:2).

"Delivered thee unto the will [lit., soul] of them that hate thee" (Ezek. 16:27).

"You shall let her go wherever she wishes [lit., according to her soul]" (Deut. 21:14).

"Do not let them say in their heart [lit., soul]" (Psa. 35:25).

"When a man vows a vow to Jehovah or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge" (Num. 30:2).

"Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God" (1 Chron. 22:19).

"They desire and lift up their soul to return to dwell there" (Jer. 44:14, Amplified Bible).

"The things that my soul refused to touch" (Job 6:7).

"So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life" (Job 7:15).

The words "will" and "desire" in the foregoing verses show that they refer to the human will. The setting, the lifting up, the refusing, and the choosing are all functions of man's will, and they all issue

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from the soul. Hence, we see that the soul includes the will.

The soul also includes the intellect or the mind:

"I take from them...that whereupon they set their minds [lit., souls], their sons and their daughters" (Ezek. 24:25).

"With despiteful minds [lit., soul]" (Ezek. 36:5).

"That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good" (Prov. 19:2).

"How long will I bear concern in my soul" (Psa. 13:2).

"Marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (Psa. 139:14).

"My soul remembers them well/And is bowed down within me" (Lam. 3:20).

"Keep sound wisdom and discretion: so shall they be life unto thy soul" (Prov. 3:21-22).

"So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul" (Prov. 24:14).

Knowledge, setting of the mind, having in remembrance, etc., are all activities of man's mind, or intellect. The Bible considers all these to be from the soul. The soul includes the human intellect, or the mind.

The soul also includes the emotions:

The soul can love:

"And you shall love Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 6:5).

"The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Sam. 18:1).

"And you shall exchange the money for anything that your soul desires...or for anything that your soul would like" (Deut. 14:26).

"Whatsoever thy soul desireth" (1 Sam. 20:4).

"My soul longs, indeed even faints,/For the courts of Jehovah" (Psa. 84:2).

"That which your soul pitieth" (Ezek. 24:21).

"So my soul pants/For You" (Psa. 42:1).

"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth" (S.S. 1:7).

"My soul desires You in the night" (Isa. 26:9).

"My Beloved in whom My soul has found delight" (Matt. 12:18).

"My soul magnifies the Lord" (Luke 1:46).

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"And a sword will pierce through your own soul" (Luke 2:35).

These few verses reveal one function of the soul, which is to love. The desire to love comes from the soul. Hence, human love is a part of the function of the soul.

The soul can hate:

"So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat" (Job 33:20).

"The lame and the blind, that are hated of David's soul" (2 Sam. 5:8).

"My soul was impatient with them, and their soul also detested me" (Zech. 11:8).

"My soul is weary of my life" (Job 10:1).

"Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat" (Psa. 107:18).

These few verses teach us that hatred is a function of the soul.

The soul can be affected in other ways:

"The soul of all the people was grieved" (1 Sam. 30:6).

"Her soul is vexed" (2 Kings 4:27).

"His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel" (Judg. 10:16).

"How long will ye vex my soul" (Job 19:2).

"My soul will exult in My God" (Isa. 61:10).

"Cause the soul of Your servant to rejoice" (Psa. 86:4).

"Their soul fainted in them" (Psa. 107:5).

"Why art you bowed down, O my soul? / And why do you groan within me?" (Psa. 42:5).

"Return unto thy rest, O my soul" (Psa. 116:7).

"My soul breaketh for the longing" (Psa. 119:20).

"My soul melteth for heaviness" (Psa. 119:28).

"Sweet to the soul" (Prov. 16:24).

"Let your soul delight itself in fatness" (Isa. 55:2).

"When my soul fainted within me" (Jonah 2:7).

"My soul is exceedingly sorrowful" (Matt. 26:38).

"Now is my soul troubled" (John 12:27).

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"Tormented his righteous soul day after day" (2 Pet. 2:8).

These few verses tell us how the soul is affected. The feeling of being affected comes from the soul.

From the above verses we can see the functions in our emotions. Love, hatred, feelings of being affected, sensations, etc., all come from the soul. This shows us that our emotion is also a part of our soul.

## THE SOUL-LIFE

Some who have studied the Bible have pointed out that there are three words for life in Greek: (1) bios, (2) psuche, and (3) zoe. Although all three words denote life, the life which they denote is different. Bios refers to the physical life. When the Lord Jesus said that the widow had cast in all the "living" that she had, He was using this word (Luke 21:4). Zoe is the highest life, the spiritual life. Whenever the Bible mentions "eternal life," the word zoe is used for "life." Psuche is the life which makes a man living; it is man's natural life, that is, the life of the soul. When the Bible speaks of man's life, it uses this word.

What we want to pay attention to now are the words "soul" and "soul-life." In the original language, they are the same word. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the New Testament was written in Greek. In the Old Testament, both "soul" and "soul-life" are nephesh. In the New Testament, both "soul" and "soul-life" are psuche. Hence, we see that the soul is one of the three elements of man and is man's life, the very natural life.

In many translations, the word soul is translated as "life." Here we will give only a few examples:

"But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat" (Gen. 9:4).

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev. 17:11).

"For those who seek the life of the child" (Matt. 2:20).

"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save a life or to destroy it?" (Luke 6:9).

"Men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 15:26).

"But I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself" (Acts 20:24).

"To give His life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

"The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" (John 10:11, 15, 17).

In the above passages, the word life is "soul" in the original language. But we cannot translate it as soul, for that would not make sense. The reason there is this kind of usage is that the soul is man's life.

We have said that the soul is one of the three elements of man. The soul-life is man's natural life, the life which enables a person to exist, to be organic, and to live. It is the life which gives man the power to live as a man. Since the Bible has nephesh and psuche to denote both the soul as well as man's own life, we can readily see that these two things, though distinguishable, are inseparable. They are distinguishable because in some places psuche can be considered the soul or the life, but not vice versa.

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For example, the same word is used many times in Luke 12:19-23 and Mark 3:4, but it cannot be translated into the same word in English. If we do, it will not make sense. On the other hand, the soul and man's own life are inseparable because the two things are fully integrated within man. Without man's soul, there is no more life. The Bible never tells us that a fleshly person has any life apart from the soul. Man's life is the soul that has permeated the body. When the soul is joined to the body, the soul becomes man's life. Life is but an expression of the soul. Since our present physical life is the life of the soul, the Bible calls our present body "a soulish body" (1 Cor. 15:44).

This point about the soul being our human life is the most crucial point. This has much to do with our being a spiritual Christian or a soulish Christian. We will speak more concerning this later.

We have seen many verses that prove that the soul contains the faculties of the mind, the emotion, and the will. We know that man's thoughts, imaginations, judgments, feelings, emotions, stimulations, and desires all come from the soul. Hence, man's life is nothing but a life that is joined to the mind, the emotion, and the will. Man's life is but an expression of the mind, emotion, and will. All the things in the natural realm that are included in man's personality are the various faculties of the soul. The soul-life is man's natural life in the flesh. The various activities mentioned above in the Scripture, such as love, hatred, knowledge, counsel, vexation, rejoicing, and decisions, are all functions of the soul-life.

## **THE SOUL AND THE PERSON**

Now that we have seen the soul as our personality, our organ of deliberation, and our life, we can conclude that this soul is the true "I"; it is the self. The self is the soul. The Bible has ample proofs of this.

In Numbers 30 "binding oneself" is mentioned over ten times. In the original language, these places all say "binding the soul." This shows us clearly that the soul is our self. In many places the Bible translates the word "soul" as "self." We will only quote a few examples:

"You shall not defile yourselves with them so that you become unclean" (Lev. 11:43).

"You shall not make yourselves unclean" (Lev. 11:44).

"For themselves and for their seed" (Esth. 9:31).

"He teareth himself in his anger" (Job 18:4).

"Because he justified himself" (Job 32:2).

"But they themselves have gone into captivity" (Isa. 46:2).

Furthermore, in Exodus 12:16, "That which every man must eat" is, in the original language, "That which every soul must eat." In Numbers 35:11 and 15, "The manslayer who kills any person without intent" is, in the original language, "The manslayer who kills any soul without intent." In Numbers 23:10, "Let me die the death of the upright" is, in the original language, "Let the soul die." In Leviticus 2:1, "When a person brings a meal offering" is, in the original language, "When a soul brings a meal offering." Psalm 131:2 says, "My soul is even as a weaned child." In Esther 4:13, "Think not with thyself" is, in the original language, "Think not in thy soul." In Amos 6:8, "The Lord Jehovah has sworn by Himself" is, in the original language, "The Lord Jehovah has sworn by the soul." These few

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verses indicate to us in different ways that the soul is the person himself.

In the New Testament we have the same thing. In 1 Peter 3:20 the eight persons are referred to as eight souls. In Acts 27:37 the two hundred seventy-six are referred to as two hundred seventy-six souls. In Romans 2:9 the evil men are referred to as the evil souls. To warn the evil souls means to warn the evil men. James 5:20 says that the turning of a sinner back is the saving of a soul from death. In Luke 12:19 the foolish rich man spoke comforting words to his own soul, meaning that he spoke comforting words to himself.

Hence, it is very obvious that the Bible considers man's soul or man's soul-life as man himself. The above examples show that in these cases, if we translate the word into "soul" or "life," it would become meaningless. The only way is to translate it as himself, oneself, or themselves. The reason for this is that the Holy Spirit considers man's soul or life as man himself. We can confirm this by the words of the Lord Jesus.

Matthew 16:26 says, "For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life [psuche]? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life [psuche]?"

Luke 9:25 says, "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world but loses or forfeits himself?"

Matthew says the same thing as Luke. In one case, it mentions the soul-life, while in the other case, it mentions himself. Hence, we see that the Holy Spirit is expounding the "himself" in Luke with Matthew, or one may also say that He is expounding the "soul-life" in Matthew with Luke. Man's soul or life is just man himself. Man himself is his soul or his life.

After we have read the verses concerning the soul, we conclude that man's soul is just man's life, man himself, his personality, and the will, mind, and emotion that are included in his personality. From this study we draw the conclusion that the human soul encompasses everything that makes up the person as a human being. Every man who lives in the flesh has a soul and has everything that comes with the soul. The soul is the life which all men of flesh share in common. Before a man is regenerated, everything that his life contains, whether it be his self, life, breath, power, mind, proposals, love, or feelings, is all of the soul. In other words, the life of the soul is the life which a man acquires from his mother's womb. Everything that this life has (before a person believes in the Lord), that it will have, and that it can possibly have, is of the soul-life. If we know clearly what is of the soul, it will be easy for us to know what is of the spirit, and we will be able to differentiate between the spiritual things and the soulish things.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE FALL OF MAN

The man God created is very different from the other things that God created. Man, like the angels, has a spirit, and like the lower animals, also has a soul. When God created man, He gave man an absolute free will. He did not make man a machine which can only turn according to His direction. After observing the way God commanded man in Genesis 2 concerning what to eat and what not to eat, we

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can see that the man God created is not a dead machine under God's manipulation. Rather, he has a free will. If he wants to obey God, he can obey Him. If he wants to disobey God, he can disobey Him. He has an absolute sovereign power over himself. Both obedience and disobedience are at his discretion, and he can choose either at will. This is the most important point. We have to realize that in our spiritual life God never robs us of our freedom. Therefore, without active participation on our part, He will not do anything for us. Whether it be God or the devil, no one can work on us without the consent of our will, because man's will is free.

The spirit was originally the highest part of man, and the soul and the body were subject to it. Under normal conditions, the spirit is like the lady of a house, the soul is like the steward, while the body is like the servants. When the lady of the house needs something done, she charges the steward, and the steward in turn directs the servants to do it accordingly. The lady gives the order in private, while the servants take the order from the steward. Outwardly, the steward seems to be the master. But actually, the real master is the lady of the house. Unfortunately, man fell, failed, and sinned, so that the original, proper order of the spirit, soul, and body was overturned.

God has given man sovereign power over himself. Man's soul is indeed endowed with many gifts from God, among which the most important ones are the mind and the will, or the consciousness and the volition. God's original goal was for man to receive and digest God's spiritual life with the truth and reality in this spiritual life. God has given these gifts to man in order that man would live for Him according to His knowledge and His will. If man's spirit and soul were as perfect, healthy, living, and normal as when they were created, his body would have remained forever and would not have changed. If he had exercised the will in his soul to take the fruit of life, God's own life would have entered into his spirit; it would have saturated his soul and would have changed his body, so that he would not have needed to die or see corruption and would have received the "eternal life." If that were the case, the soul-life would have been fully filled with the spirit-life, and man's whole being would have become spiritual. Contrary to this, when the order of the spirit and the soul was destroyed, the inner man became darkened, and man's mortal body became no longer enduring. Soon everything that belongs to the body will go into destruction and corruption.

We know that between the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, man's soul did not choose the tree of life. Instead, he chose the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In Genesis 2:17 God forbade Adam to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and told man that in the day he ate of it he would surely die. Yet in the preceding verse God had promised that the fruits of all other trees could be eaten. We see in this chapter that God purposely mentioned the tree of life first and then the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He also promised that the fruit of all trees except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil could be eaten freely. Was it not God's purpose that Adam should eat of the fruit of the tree of life? Who can say that this was not His purpose?

The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the fruit that uplifts man's soul and dampens man's spirit. The knowledge of good and evil constitutes the work of the soul in this world. God forbade man to eat of this fruit, not only for the purpose of testing man, but because He knew that within man was the spiritual life and the soulish life, and that if man were to eat of this fruit, his soulish life would develop, and his spiritual life would die. This means that he would lose the knowledge of God and would die to God. This was God's love. The knowledge of good and evil is wicked in this world. Knowledge comes from the intellectual part of man's soul. When man ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, surely his soulish life developed and was uplifted. Once the soulish life

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develops and is uplifted, the spiritual life is suppressed, loses the knowledge of God, and becomes as dead.

Most servants of God would agree that the tree of life here is the life that God gives to man in His Son Jesus Christ. That is, it is the eternal life, God's own uncreated life. Here are two trees, one to develop the spiritual life and the other to develop the soulish life. Although man was without sin, he was neither holy nor righteous. Man was in a neutral position: he could receive God's life and become a spiritual person, sharing God's nature, or he could develop his own created soulish life, making himself soulish, and thus put his spirit to death. Man's tripartite nature is fully balanced by God, and if any one of his three parts experiences inordinate development, the other parts will unavoidably suffer loss.

If we understand the origin of the soul and the principle of its life, we will be greatly helped in our spiritual life. The spirit comes from God and is given by God (Num. 16:22). The soul, however, does not have such a direct relationship with God. The soul was produced when the spirit entered into the body. The characteristic of the soul is that it is associated with the creatures. It is a created life, a life in the natural realm. If the soulish life remains forever in the place of a steward and allows the spirit to be the "lady of the house," its use will be very great, because by its resolve, man is able to receive God's life and to be related to God in life. However, if this soulish life develops, it will suppress the spirit and subject all of man's conduct to the natural realm of the creature, thus disabling man from joining himself to God's supernatural and super-created life. When man ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, his soulish life developed, and he fell into the place of death.

Satan's temptation began with a question. He knew that once a question was raised, Eve would have to exercise her mind to think. If Eve had been willing to be subject to the control of the spirit, she would have rejected this question. Once she decided to answer the question, she had to exercise her mind, and her soul had to act contrary to the spirit and beyond its limit. Moreover, Satan's question was full of mistakes. He asked in this way in order that Eve would correct his mistakes. In this way, her mind became more active. But Eve did more than this; she changed God's word in her answer and in her conversation. The enemy tempted her by telling her that if she would eat, her eyes would be opened, and she would be like God, knowing good and evil. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise" (Gen. 3:6). This was Eve's judgment. At the beginning Satan stirred up the mind in her soul. Now he went one step further to gain her will, and she sinned.

The work of the enemy begins with the need of the body. He first told her to eat of the fruit, something that was entirely related to the body. Next he took one step further to tempt her soul by telling her that if her body would take the fruit, her eyes would be opened, and she would know good and evil. He indicated to her that such a pursuit for knowledge was legitimate. As a result her spirit rebelled against God, and she wondered whether God had forbidden her to eat because His intention was wicked. The temptation of Satan comes first to the body, then to the soul, and last to the spirit.

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After she was tempted, Eve made a judgment in her will, which was: (1) "that the tree was good for food." This is the "lust of the flesh." Her flesh was touched first. (2) "It was pleasant to the eyes." This is the "lust of the eyes." Her body and soul were also deceived. (3) "A tree to be desired to make one wise." This is "the vainglory of life." The word "desired" means that the emotion and will in her soul were moved. Now the function of the soul was motivated, and there was nothing to stop it. She was no longer a spectator, but was moved in her love and desired after the fruit. The emotion is indeed a dangerous master to man!

Why was there the desire? Not only the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes made the demands, but the curiosity in the soul urged her to pursue further. This was something that would make her wise. The activity of the soul can many times be detected in the pursuit for wisdom and knowledge, including spiritual knowledge. To give no time to wait on God, to have no trust in the leading of the Holy Spirit, and to try to increase one's knowledge with the help of one's mind and books, these are the activities of the flesh. The result of this is damage to the spiritual life. Since man's fall came from the pursuit of knowledge, God used the foolishness of the cross to destroy the wisdom of the wise. Intellectual power is the source of the fall. Therefore, if a man desires to be saved, he has to believe in the foolishness of the cross in order that he would not trust in intellectual power. The tree of knowledge led to man's fall, but God used the foolish tree (1 Pet. 2:24) to save man. Therefore, "if anyone thinks that he is wise among you in this age, let him become foolish that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 3:18-19; 1:18-25).

After we have carefully read the story of the temptation and the fall, we can see how the rebellion of Adam and Eve led to the development of their soul, the result of which is that the spirit lost its position and fell into darkness. The most important parts of man's soul are his mind, will, and emotion. The will is the master of man; it is the organ of deliberation. The mind is the thinking organ, while the emotion is the loving organ. The apostle told us that "Adam was not deceived" (1 Tim. 2:14). This shows that Adam's mind was not confused. The one who was weak in mind and intellect was Eve. "But the woman, having been quite deceived, has fallen into transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14). The record of Genesis says, "The woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (3:13). Adam said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave [not beguiled] me of the tree, and I did eat" (v. 12). Adam was not beguiled; his mind was still clear. He knew that the fruit was the forbidden fruit. Yet he ate it because of his emotion. Adam knew that all the words of the serpent were the deceptions of the enemy. When we read the word of the apostle, we find that Adam sinned purposely and was not like Eve who sinned through being beguiled. He loved Eve more than himself. He idolized her and loved her so much that he rebelled against the commandment of the Lord for her sake. How pitiful this was. His head was controlled by his heart, and his reason was overcome by his love. Why have men "not believed the truth"? It is because they "have taken pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thes. 2:12). It is not because reason is lacking, but because the desire is lacking. Therefore, when a man truly turns to the Lord "with the heart [and not with the head,] there is believing unto righteousness" (Rom. 10:10).

Satan gained Adam's will through his emotion, and caused him to sin. The way Satan beguiled Eve was to confuse her mind, gain her will, and then cause her to sin. When man's will, mind, and emotion were poisoned by the serpent to follow Satan and to rebel against God, the spirit with which man communicates with God received a fatal blow. Here we see the principle of Satan's work. He beguiled man's soul to sin through the things of the flesh (the eating of the fruit). Once the soul has sinned, the spirit falls into darkness and degradation. This is the order of all his works—from the outside to the inside. Either he works from man's body or he works from his mind or his emotion for the purpose of

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gaining his will. Once man's will surrenders, Satan gains the whole being, and the spirit is put to death. The way he worked the first time is the way he works in all subsequent times. God's work is always from the inside to the outside. He first works from man's spirit, then enlightens man's mind, touches man's emotion, finally causes man to exercise his will to activate his body to carry out God's will. All the devil's works go from the outside to the inside, while all the works of God's Spirit go from the inside to the outside. In this way we can differentiate what is of God and what is of Satan. This shows us that once Satan gains man's will, he controls man.

We must be careful to realize that the soul is the organ of man's personality; it is the part that expresses man's free will and is man's master. This is why the Bible often says that it is the soul that has committed sin. Micah 6:7 mentions "the sin of my soul." Ezekiel 18:4 and 20 speak of "the soul that sinneth." In Leviticus and Numbers, we often see the expression "if a soul sin" [KJV]. Proposing to sin is the function of the soul. The definition of sin is the will responding to temptation. Therefore, to sin is a matter of the will, which is of the soul. For this reason, propitiation is for the soul. "To make an atonement [propitiation] for your souls" (Exo. 30:15). "To make propitiation for your souls" (Lev. 17:11). "To make an atonement for our souls before the Lord" (Num. 31:50 [KJV]). Because the one who sins is the soul, the one who requires atonement is also the soul. For the same reason, only a soul can atone sins. "But Jehovah was pleased to crush Him, to afflict Him with grief. / If You make His soul a trespass offering, / ...Because of the travail of His soul, He will see / And He will be satisfied; / ...Because He poured out His soul unto death... / Yet He alone bore the sin of many / And interceded for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:10-12).

If we study the nature of Adam's sin, we will find that besides rebellion, there is also the matter of independence. We should always bear in mind the matter of the free will. The tree of life signifies dependence. In the beginning, man had not yet received God's life. If he had received this life, he would have obtained eternal life. This shows that there was the possibility for man to attain to the highest form of life. It also shows that man did not attain to it. Man will not attain to the highest until he has acquired God's life. This is the meaning of dependence. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil signifies independence. Man wants to have knowledge that God has not given to him and tries to gain the things outside of God by exercising his own will. All these speak of independence. When man rebelled against God, it was a sign of independence because rebellion against God means that there is no further need to depend on God. For man to try to know good and evil is also a sign of independence. He is not satisfied with what God has given him. The difference between being spiritual and being soulish is very clear here. To be spiritual is to fully trust in God and to be satisfied with what God has given. To be soulish is to turn away from God and to freely seek after what God has not given, in particular, to seek after knowledge. Independence is a characteristic of the soul. No matter how good a matter is, even if it is the matter of worship, if there is not the total dependence on God and if there is any self-assurance or self-confidence, it is something soulish. Within a man, the tree of life cannot grow vigorously by the side of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This rebellion and independence is the principle of transgression for all sinners as well as for the believers.

### MAN'S SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY AFTER THE FALL

Adam existed by the breath of life, which is the spirit. The spirit has God-consciousness; it knows God's voice, fellowships with God, and has a very keen knowledge of God. After Adam fell, his spirit became dead.

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At the beginning, God said to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). After Adam and Eve ate the fruit, they continued to live a few hundred years. This shows that the death that God spoke of was not only physical death. The death of Adam began from his spirit. What kind of death was this death? The scientific definition of death is to be cut off from all fellowship with the environment. When the spirit dies, the spirit loses its fellowship with God. When the body dies, the spirit cuts off fellowship with the body. Therefore, for the spirit to be dead does not mean that the spirit is gone. It merely means that the spirit has lost its keen knowledge of God and is dead to God. Spiritual death means that there is no more fellowship with God. Consider, for example, a dumb person. It is not that this person does not have a mouth or two lungs. He cannot speak because there is some problem with his mouth. His mouth is dead to the human language. When Adam disobeyed God, his spirit died. The spirit was still there, but it was dead to God and had lost its capacity. When man sinned, this sin corrupted the keen intuitive knowledge of God that existed in man's spirit so that he became dead to the things of the spiritual realm. Thereafter, man may have religion, morality, education, ability, power, and mental and physical health, yet he is dead to God. He can speak about God, conjecture about God, and even preach about God, yet he is dead to God. He can no longer hear or feel the voice of God's Holy Spirit. This is why many times in the New Testament, God refers to those who live in their flesh as dead people.

The death in the spirit of the first man gradually spread to the realm of the body. Although after his spirit died, he still lived for a long time, during that time death was operating in him. It continued to work in him until his spirit, soul, and body all became dead. At that time, a body that could have been glorified and changed was turned back to dust. When the inner man within him became disorganized and fallen, his outer body was destined to death and destruction.

From that time on, the spirit of Adam (as well as that of all his descendants) was suppressed by the soul. Soon after, through the soul's suppression, the spirit was merged with the soul, and the two parts became closely knit together. This is why the writer of Hebrews said in 4:12 that God's word has to pierce and divide the spirit from the soul. The reason that the two have to be divided is that they have become one. Since the spirit became so closely knit to the soul, man began to live in an idealistic world. He began to act according to his intellect or his feelings. At that time, the spirit had lost all its power and senses, and had become dormant. Originally, the spirit had the ability to know God and serve Him. Now it had lost all its ability to function and had fallen unconscious. Although it was still there, it was as if it were not there anymore. This is the meaning of the expression in Jude, "soulish, having no spirit" (v. 19). (In verse 19, the spirit does not refer to the Holy Spirit but to the human spirit, because the expression immediately preceding it says "soulish." Since the soul is human, the spirit following this expression must also be human. The position of the article in Greek also confirms this.) This does not mean that man's spirit no longer exists, for Numbers 16:22 clearly tells us that God is the "God of the spirits of all flesh." Every person in the world still has his spirit. But this spirit is covered up by his sins and cannot fellowship with God.

Although this spirit is dead to God, it still works as actively as the mind and the body. It is indeed dead to God, but it is still active in other areas. Sometimes a fallen one can have a spirit that is stronger than his soul or his body and that can still rule over his whole being. Most people are soulish or are carnal. But the former kind of people are "spiritual"—their spirits are greater than others'. One can find such cases in those who practice planchette, divination, witchcraft, etc. They communicate with the spiritual realm, not through the Holy Spirit, but rather through the evil spirits. The spirits of sinful men are joined to Satan and the evil spirits. Their spirits are dead to God but alive to Satan and receptive to the

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operation of the evil spirits within them.

The soul becomes subject to the demand of the senses and becomes their slave, so that even when the Holy Spirit would fight for a place for God, the fight is futile. This is why the Scripture says, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh" (Gen. 6:3). The flesh in the Bible refers to the life and nature of the soul and body of the unregenerated man. More often it refers to the sinful nature within the body. This flesh is the common nature which man shares with other animals. Now man is completely under the control of the flesh, and there is no possibility of escape. The soul has replaced the spirit as the ruling one, and everything is independent and self-centered. Man now walks according to the desires of the heart. Even in matters of religion and in the most zealous pursuit of God, man exercises the power of his soul and decides on his own to seek after God and to please God apart from the revelation of the Holy Spirit. The soul not only exercises itself in this way but is controlled by the body. The lusts of the body, its feelings and demands, are all summoning the soul to obey, to carry out their commands, and to gratify them. Not only are all the descendants of Adam dead in their spirits, but they are "out of the earth, earthy" (1 Cor. 15:47). They are fully under the control of the flesh and walk according to the soulish life and the carnal nature. Such people cannot have fellowship with God. Sometimes they express their intellectual power, and sometimes they express their lusts. More often, they express both. The flesh controls the whole being without hindrance and without any interference.

This is the kind of people mentioned in Jude 18 and 19: "Mockers, going on according to their own lusts for ungodliness. These are those who make divisions, soulish, having no spirit." To be soulish is the opposite of having the spirit. Now, the spirit that was the highest, that ought to be joined to God, and that ought to rule over the soul and the body has become surrounded by the soul, whose motive and purpose are totally earthy. The spirit has lost its original position. Its condition is now abnormal. This is why the Bible says that they have no spirit. The result of such a fully soulish condition is to mock, to go on according to one's own lusts, and to make divisions.

First Corinthians 2:14 also speaks of this kind of unregenerated soulish person: "But a soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually." Such persons are controlled by their souls and are suppressing their spirits. They are the opposite to the spiritual man. Although these ones can be very intelligent and can come up with wonderful ideas and theories, they cannot say anything about the things of the Holy Spirit of God. They cannot receive the revelation from the Holy Spirit. How different is this from the world's view! The world thinks that man's intellectual power and his reason are almighty, that he can find out all kinds of truth in the world by his mind. But God's Word considers these as very vain.

Even when a man is soulish, many times he still realizes the uncertainties of this life and seeks for eternal life in the coming age. However, man can never find the truth of life through his mind or by theories. These are unreliable means. Most of the time, clever people hold divergent views. Theories are liable to lead men to errors. They are castles in the air and lead men to nothing but eternal darkness.

Indeed, unless intellectual power comes under the leading of the Holy Spirit, it is unreliable and is very dangerous. It will take right as wrong and wrong as right. If one is not careful, he will not only suffer temporary loss but will suffer permanent damage. The dark thoughts of man usually lead him into the place of eternal death. It would be well for the unregenerated soulish man to know this.

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Yet when man is fleshly, not only is he under the rule of the soul, but his soul is actually joined to his body. Many times, the soul is even directed by the body to commit the vilest sins. The body of sin is full of cravings and lusts. It was created out of the dust of the earth. Therefore, its inclinations and motives are all earthly. Since the serpent's poison has entered into man's body, its legitimate desires have now become lusts. Since the soul once obeyed the body to rebel against God's demand, it has to continue its obedience to the body. At such times, the lusts of the body express themselves in many forms of sin through the soul. The authority of this body is so great that it causes the soul to become powerless to withstand it and only be its obedient slave.

Man is divided into three parts: the spirit, the soul, and the body. God's original intention is that the spirit remain on top to rule over the soul. After man became soulish, the spirit was suppressed and became a servant to the soul. After man became carnal, the flesh, which occupied the lowest place, became the king. Man was changed from spirit-ruled to soul-ruled, and from soul-ruled to body-ruled. Step by step he became fallen, and the flesh took control. What a pity this is!

Sin has killed the spirit, and now spiritual death has come to all men so that all men die in sin and transgressions. Sin has also caused the soul to become independent so that the soulish life now becomes an independent and selfish life. Furthermore, sin has empowered the body so that now the sinful nature reigns through the body.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE WAY OF SALVATION**

#### **THE JUDGMENT AT GOLGOTHA**

Death came into the world because of man's fall. This death, which is a spiritual death, a death which separates man from God, came through sin. From the time of the fall until now, there has been no change—death always comes through sin. Romans 5:12 says that "through one man sin entered into the world." Adam sinned and sin entered into the world. "And through sin, death"; this shows that the unalterable result of sin is death. "And thus death passed on to all men." For what reason? "Because all have sinned." Not only has death "passed on to all men," but according to the literal translation of this phrase, death "passed through all men." All of man's spirit, soul, and body have been permeated by death. Death is present in every part of man. Therefore, man has no alternative but to receive God's life. The way of salvation is not dependent upon man's improvement, because "death" cannot be improved. Sin must first be judged, and then there can be the freedom from death which comes through sin. This is the salvation of Jesus Christ.

According to the ordination in the Bible, the man who sins must die. Therefore, no animal or angel can be a substitute for man to bear the punishment of sin. It is man's tripartite nature that sins; therefore, the one who dies must have man's nature. Only human nature can make redemption for human nature. Since all men have sinned, no one's death is sufficient even to redeem himself from his own sin. For this reason the Lord Jesus came and took on human nature in order to bear the judgment for human nature. He had no sin, so His holy nature could, through death, redeem the sinful nature of man. He

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died as a substitute, bore all the punishment of sin, and gave His life a ransom for many so that all who believe in Him shall not come into condemnation (John 5:24).

When He, as the Word, became flesh, He included all flesh in Himself. As the act of the one man Adam represented the deeds of all mankind, so the work of the one man Christ also represented the work of all mankind. We must see that Christ included all mankind before we can understand what redemption is. The transgression of the one man Adam is the transgression of all mankind, past and present. This is because Adam was the head of the human race, and all men were born of him. Likewise, the righteousness accomplished by the one man Christ becomes the righteousness of all mankind, both past and present. This is because Christ is the head of the new race, and this new man is born of Christ.

An illustration of this fact is found in Hebrews 7. Here the apostle is trying to show that the priesthood of Melchisedec is greater than the priesthood of Levi. As Abraham gave to Melchisedec a tenth of all and also received the blessing from Melchisedec, so Melchisedec is greater than Levi. Why is this? "For he was still in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him" (v. 10). We know Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Levi; therefore, Levi was the great-grandson of Abraham. When Abraham offered up his tithe and received the blessing, although Levi was not yet born, nor were his father and grandfather, the Bible nevertheless reckoned the tithing of Abraham and his receiving of the blessing to be Levi's tithing and receiving of the blessing. Since Abraham is lesser than Melchisedec, then Levi also must be lesser than Melchisedec. This event helps us to understand why all were counted to have sinned when Adam sinned, and why all were counted to have been judged when Christ was judged. When Adam transgressed, all were in his loins, and when Christ was judged, the lives of all regenerated sinners were also in His loins. For this reason, when Christ was judged for man's sin, all those who believe in Him were also reckoned to have been judged, and all those who believe in Him will not be judged anymore.

Because human nature must suffer judgment, God's Son, the man Jesus Christ, bore on the cross in His spirit, soul, and body the punishment mankind deserved.

Let us first consider the suffering in His body. Man sins through his body. The body causes man to sin and sense the pleasure of sin. Therefore, the part of man that needs to be punished is the body. Man sins through the body, and the body lures man to commit sin. Consequently, the body must be punished. Who can fully comprehend the suffering in the body of the Lord Jesus while He was on the cross? In the Old Testament, "the Psalms of the Messiah" (psalms concerning Christ) give a clear description of the agony in His body. "They pierce my hands and feet" (Psa. 22:16). The prophet described Him as One "whom they have pierced" (Zech 12:10). His hands, His feet, His forehead, His side, and His heart were all pierced by men, pierced by sinful human nature and for sinful human nature. At that time He had been sorely wounded. Because the weight of His body had been hanging on the cross without support, He had a high fever due to constricted blood circulation in the whole body. His mouth became very dry, and He cried, "My tongue is stuck to my jaws" (Psa. 22:15), and "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Psa. 69:21). The hands love to sin; therefore, they must be nailed. The mouth loves to sin; therefore, it must suffer. The feet love to sin; therefore, they must be pierced. The head loves to sin; therefore, it must wear the thorny crown. The punishment which the human body needed to suffer was fully carried out on His body. It was thus that He suffered physical pain until death ended all. Although He had the power to avoid these sufferings, He gave His body over willingly to suffer these indescribable pains and agonies. He did not shrink back for a moment until He knew that

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"all things had now been finished" (John 19:28). Only then did He give up His life.

Not only did His body suffer, but His soul also suffered. Our soul is the faculty of self-consciousness. When the Lord Jesus was on the cross, the people offered Him wine mixed with myrrh so that He would become unconscious and would not feel the pain, but He refused it. He did not want to lose His consciousness. Man's soul is quite keen to the pleasures of sin; now He must be fully conscious of the pains of sin. He chose to drink the cup given Him by God and would not drink the cup that would result in the loss of consciousness.

How shameful is the cross as an instrument of punishment! It was for the punishment of runaway slaves. A slave had no possessions, no civil rights, and no rights of ownership. Even his body belonged to his master; therefore, the cross, the most shameful punishment, was applied to runaway slaves. The Lord Jesus took His place as a slave and was nailed to the cross. Isaiah called Him a slave; Paul also said He was a slave. He came as a slave to save us, who throughout all our lives were slaves to sin and Satan. We were slaves of lust, temper, habits, and the world; we were sold to sin; but He died for our enslavement and bore all our shame.

The Bible tells us that the soldiers took His garments (John 19:23). When He was crucified, He was almost naked. This was the shame of the crucifixion. Sin takes away our garments of light and makes us naked. The Lord Jesus was stripped before Pilate and then again unclothed at Golgotha. How did His holy soul react to this? Did this not trample on the holiness of His humanity and make Him feel shameful? Who can comprehend how His soul felt in such an hour? While all men enjoyed the glory of sin, our Savior suffered the shame of sin. Truly, at that time God "covered him with shame," and "Your enemies have reproached, O Jehovah, with which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed" (Psa. 89:45, 51). Nevertheless, He "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2).

No one can actually comprehend how His soul suffered on the cross. Often we only consider the suffering in His body and neglect the feeling of His soul. The week before the Passover, He said, "Now is My soul troubled" (John 12:27). This speaks of the cross. When He was at Gethsemane He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death" (Matt. 26:38). Without these words we could hardly imagine the agonies in His soul. Isaiah 53:10 through 12 says three times that He gave up His soul and poured out His soul unto death. Because He bore the curse and the shame of the cross, all who believe in Him no longer need to bear the curse and the shame.

His spirit also suffered greatly. The spirit is the part through which man fellowships with God. God's Son is holy and sinless, set apart from sinners. His spirit, in union with the Holy Spirit, never had a moment of obscurity or disturbance. He constantly enjoyed God's presence. "For I am not alone, but I and the Father who sent Me" (John 8:16). "And He who sent Me is with Me" (v. 29). Therefore, He was able to pray, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I knew that You always hear Me" (11:41-42). However, while He was on the cross—if ever there was a day He needed God's presence, it had to be that day (probably no other day exceeded that day)—He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). His spirit was actually separated from God. Now He felt alone, rejected, and separated. Still He was obedient, doing God's will; but now He was forsaken—not for Himself but for the sins of others.

The greatest effect of sin is on the spirit. Therefore, even such a holy One, the Son of God, because of bearing others' sins, actually became separated from God. It was a fact that in the unfathomable eternity

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"I and the Father are one" (John 10:30), and this remained true when He was on earth. Humanity could not separate Him from God. However, sin could, although it was the sin of others. He suffered the spirit's separation for us in order that our spirit could be reconciled to God.

When He saw the death of Lazarus, perhaps He thought about His own death, so He "was moved with indignation in His spirit" (John 11:33). When He announced that He would be betrayed and die on the cross, He was "troubled in His spirit" (13:21). Therefore, when He was on the hill of Golgotha receiving God's judgment, He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" "I remember God, and I moan; / I complain, and my spirit faints" (Psa. 77:3). It was because His spirit was cut off from God's Spirit that He was devoid in His spirit of the strength of the Holy Spirit normally supplied to Him (Eph. 3:16). He therefore cried, "I am poured out like water;/And all my bones are out of joint./My heart is like wax;/It is melted within me./My strength is dried up like a shard;/And my tongue is stuck to my jaws;/You have put me in the dust of death" (Psa. 22:14-15).

On the one hand, God's Holy Spirit departed from Him; on the other hand, the evil spirit of Satan mocked Him. The words in Psalm 22:11-13 seem to point this out: "Do not be far from me./...For there is none to help me./Many bulls surround me,/The mighty bulls of Bashan encompass me, / They open their mouth at me,/Like a ravening and roaring lion."

His spirit, on the one hand, felt God's forsaking, and on the other hand, was resisting the evil spirit's sneering and mocking. Man's spirit, when separated from God, is self-exalted and becomes the operating ground of evil spirits (Eph. 2:2). However, man's spirit ought to be completely broken so that man can no longer resist God and be united with the enemy. The Lord Jesus became sin for us on the cross. The holy human nature within Him was completely broken due to God's judgment of the sinful nature of man. Christ was forsaken by God, suffering the most painful part of God's judgment in that the love, the kindly countenance, and the light of God were all hidden from Him, causing the Savior to undergo in darkness the wrath of God's punishment toward sin. To be forsaken by God is the result of sin.

Now our sinful nature, spirit, soul, and body have all been punished. The sinful nature of man was fully judged in the holy human nature of the Lord Jesus. The holy human nature has gained the victory in the Lord Jesus. The necessary punishments for the body, the soul, and the spirit of the sinner have all been executed upon the Lord Jesus. He is our representative. We become one with Him by faith, and He becomes one with us. His death is our death. His being judged is our being judged. In Him, our spirit, soul, and body have all been judged and punished. It is the same as if we had gone through this punishment ourselves. Therefore, "there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

This is what He has accomplished for us. This is our position in the light of the law. "For he who has died is justified from sin." Our position is that we are dead in the Lord Jesus. Now we ought to have the work of the Holy Spirit to apply this fact to our experience. The cross is the place where the sinner—spirit, soul, and body—is judged. It is through His death and resurrection that God's Holy Spirit can impart God's nature into us. The cross bears the punishment of the sinner, the cross evaluates the worth of the sinner, the cross crucifies all sinners, and the cross releases the life of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, from now on, whoever is willing to receive the cross will be regenerated by the Holy Spirit and receive the life of the Lord Jesus.

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## REGENERATION

Before man is regenerated, his spirit is far away from God and is dead. The meaning of death is to be separated from life. The ultimate name of life is God. Since death means to be separated from life, and God is life, then to be dead is to be separated from God. Man's spirit apart from God is deadened, having no fellowship with Him. The soul controls the whole man so that he lives either in his ideas or in excitement. The lusts and desires of the body bring the soul into subjection.

Man's spirit became deadened; therefore, there is the need for the spirit to be resurrected. The rebirth which the Lord Jesus spoke about to Nicodemus is the rebirth of the spirit. To be born again is not a matter related to our body, as Nicodemus thought, nor is it a matter related to our soul, because not only is the "body of sin" to be made of none effect (Rom. 6:6), but also "they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts" (this is the soul) (Gal. 5:24). We ought to especially emphasize that regeneration is the impartation of God's life into man's spirit. Because Christ has made redemption for our soul and destroyed the principle of the flesh, we who are one with Him can have a share in His resurrected, deathless life. Our being one with Christ's death and our initial step of obtaining His resurrection life are in our spirit. To be born again is completely a matter in the spirit; it has no relationship with the soul or the body.

Man is unique among all God's creation not because he has or is a soul, but because he has a spirit, and this spirit united with a soul becomes a man. This kind of union causes man to be unique in the universe. According to the Bible, man's soul alone cannot form any relationship with God. Man's relationship with God is in his spirit. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must use their spirit. Only spirit can relate to Spirit. Only spirit can worship Spirit. Therefore, in the Bible we see that only spirit can serve Spirit (Rom. 1:9; 7:6; 12:11), only spirit can know Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9-12), only spirit can worship God who is Spirit (John 4:23-24; Phil. 3:3), and only spirit can receive revelation from God who is Spirit (Rev. 1:10; 1 Cor. 2:10).

We should, therefore, keep in mind that God always deals with man by means of man's spirit and also accomplishes His plan through man's spirit. For man's spirit to thus fulfill God's purpose, the spirit must continue, without ceasing, to be in living union with God Himself and not for a moment follow the outward emotions, desires, and ideas of the soul, thus contradicting the divine law. Otherwise, death will come, and the spirit will be severed from its union with God and become disconnected from the life of God. We have mentioned before that this does not mean that man no longer has a spirit, but that the spirit yields its high position to the soul. When man's spirit obeys the urge from his "outward man" in the form of ideals and desires, the result is his loss of fellowship with God. This is death. Those who are dead in "offenses and sins" are those who fulfill "the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts" (Eph 2:1, 3).

The living of an unregenerated man is almost entirely under the control of the soul. First, man has the conditions of anxiety, curiosity, joy, pride, compassion, debauchery, delight, astonishment, shame, love, regret, excitement, and happiness. Second, man has ideals, imaginations, superstitions, doubts, suppositions, investigations, inferences, examinations, analyses, reflections, etc. Third, man has the desire to obtain power, riches, social approval, freedom, position, fame, praise, and knowledge. He can be decisive, dependent, courageous, and have endurance; at the same time, he can be fearful, indecisive, independent, stubborn, and opinionated. These are the manifestations of the soul in its three aspects—emotion, mind, and will. Is not man's life full of these things? However, man's regeneration

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does not result from any of these functions. One may repent of offenses, be sorrowful for sin, and resolve to improve with tears; yet this is not salvation. Confession, decision, as well as many other religious feelings are not regeneration. Even the determination of the will, the knowledge of the intellect, and the receptiveness of the mind in deciding to gain that which is good, beautiful, and noble are merely the functions of the soul, while the spirit may remain entirely unmoved. In the matter of salvation, man's will, emotion, and mind are not the basic or primary items; rather, they are secondary, subordinate. They are servants, not the master. Therefore, regardless whether it is the sufferings of the body, the excitement of the emotion, the demand of the will, or the understanding of the mind working out reforms and improvements, none of these is what the Bible calls being born again. The regeneration in the Bible takes place in a part deeper than man's body and soul. It is in his spirit that the Holy Spirit imparts God's life to him.

For this reason every worker for the Lord ought to understand that our natural abilities cannot cause anyone to be born again. The Christian life and work, from the beginning to the end, must not rely on the power of the soul. If they do, all of the fruit will only be in the realm of the soul and will not penetrate deeper into man's spirit. We must depend on the Holy Spirit to impart God's life to others.

How can man obtain this regeneration of the spirit?

The Lord Jesus died to receive the punishment as a substitute for the sinner. The sinner—spirit, soul, and body—with all his sins, has been completely judged in the Lord Jesus on the cross. In God's sight and purpose, the death of the Lord Jesus is reckoned as the death of the people of this world. He, in His holy humanity, died for all sinful humanity. However, on man's side one work still remains; that is, by faith he must join himself—spirit, soul, and body—unto the Lord Jesus. This means that he must reckon the Lord Jesus as himself, counting the death of the Lord Jesus as his own death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as his own resurrection. This is the meaning of John 3:16: "That every one who believes into Him...would have eternal life." The sinner must exercise faith to believe into the Lord Jesus, to be joined unto His death, and thus be one in His resurrection. Then he will be able to obtain eternal life, which is a spiritual life (17:3), and thus he will be born anew.

We must be careful not to consider the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus and our co-death with Him as two separate matters. Those who pay attention to knowledge and understanding have this tendency. However, it must not be so in our spiritual life. Substitutionary death and co-death should be differentiated but never separated. When one believes in the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus, such a one has already died with Christ (Rom. 6:2). To believe that the Lord Jesus took my place of punishment is to believe that I have already been punished in the Lord Jesus. The penalty of sin is death. The punishment suffered by the Lord Jesus for us was also death; therefore, in the Lord Jesus I am already dead. Otherwise, there is no saving way. To say that He died in my place is to say that I have died in Him and have been punished in Him. (Those who trust in this fact will have this experience.)

The faith by which a sinner believes in the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus is the believing into Christ to be joined to Him. Although many times he may only see the problems regarding the penalty of sin and not have any realization of the aspect of the power of sin, this matter of being joined to the Lord is common to every believer. One who is not joined to the Lord has not believed in the Lord and has nothing to do with Him.

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Believing into the Lord in this way is to be joined to the Lord. To be joined to the Lord means to experience all that the Lord has experienced. What the Lord Jesus spoke in verses 14 and 15 of John 3 has made clear what it is to be joined to Him. It is to be joined to Him in His crucifixion and His death. Each believer in the Lord Jesus (at the least) has been united with the Lord's death positionally. But "if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, indeed we will also be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom. 6:5). Therefore, everyone who believes in the substitutional death of the Lord Jesus has been raised up (positionally) with the Lord Jesus. Although at the time he has not yet fully experienced the meaning of the Lord Jesus' resurrection, just as he has not yet entirely experienced the meaning of the Lord Jesus' death, God has raised him up with the Lord Jesus, and in the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus he has gained a new life and is born again.

We must avoid the thought that man ought to have the experience of dying and resurrecting with the Lord before he can be born again. According to the Bible, once a person believes in the Lord Jesus, he is born again. "But as many as received Him...who believe into His name...were begotten...of God" (John 1:12-13).

We ought to realize that our co-resurrection with the Lord is not an experience after regeneration. Our being born again is our co-resurrection with the Lord because the Lord's death (in other words, our death with Him) terminated the problem of our sinful life. Then, at the resurrection of the Lord (in other words, when we were resurrected with Him), He gave us a new life with which we began our Christian life. That is why the Bible says, "God...has regenerated us...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). This shows that every born-again Christian has already been raised up with the Lord. However, the apostle Paul in Philippians 3 told us that every Christian still needs to pursue to know "the power of His resurrection" (v. 10). Many Christians are born again and have participated in the Lord's resurrection but lack the manifestation of the power of resurrection.

Therefore, we must not confuse position with experience. When a person believes in the Lord Jesus, although he is still very weak and ignorant, God has placed him in a position of being reckoned as having completely died, resurrected, and ascended with the Lord. Those who are accepted in Christ are accepted just as Christ is; this is position. However, the believers may not necessarily have the experience of this. Positionally speaking, a believer in the Lord possesses all the experiences of the Lord Jesus. Experientially, at the minimum, he is born again. This rebirth is not because he has already experienced the Lord Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension to a certain degree, but because he believes in the Lord Jesus. His position causes him to have the experience of being born again. Although in experience he still does not know the power of Christ's resurrection (Phil. 3:10), he has already been made alive, raised, and seated in the heavenlies together with Christ (Eph. 2:5-6).

"The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord" (Prov. 20:27, Heb.). At the time of regeneration the Holy Spirit comes into us. He enters into man's spirit like the lighting of a lamp. This is the "new spirit" spoken of in Ezekiel 36:26. Because the old spirit was dead, the Holy Spirit puts the uncreated life of God inside it, causing it to have life and to live.

Before regeneration, man's soul ruled over his spirit. His "self" dominated his soul. His lust governed his body. The soul became the life of the spirit, the "self" became the life of the soul, and the lust became the life of the body. After man's regeneration, the Holy Spirit rules his spirit, causing his spirit to govern his soul, then through the soul to rule over his body. Now the Holy Spirit becomes the life of the spirit, and the spirit becomes the life of the entire being.

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At the time of regeneration the Holy Spirit revives the human spirit and renews it. In the Bible, regeneration refers to the step in which a man comes out of death and enters into life. This regeneration, like the physical birth, occurs only once, and once is sufficient. It is at this time of rebirth that man receives God's own life, is born of God, and becomes God's child. "Being renewed" in the Bible refers to the Holy Spirit's work of increasingly filling and permeating our being with His life and thus completely overcoming our life in the flesh. It is a lengthy, continuous, and progressive work. In such a regenerated one, the original order of the spirit and the soul is restored.

There is another point we ought to pay attention to. That is, regeneration not only restores us to the condition of Adam before his fall, but it also affords us something additional. Adam had a "spirit," but that spirit was only created by God and did not contain the uncreated life of God Himself, as signified by the tree of life. There was no life-relationship between Adam and God. As the angels were called sons of God, Adam was also called a son of God (Luke 3:38), because he was created directly by God. We who believe in the Lord Jesus are "begotten" of God (John 1:12-13) and thus have a life relationship with God. The life of a father is the life inherited by the sons. Since we are born of God, we automatically have the life of God (2 Pet. 1:4). If Adam had been willing to receive the life which God offered him by means of the tree of life, Adam would have had the eternal life, the uncreated life of God. His spirit came from God and exists forever, but how this life would become everlasting depended on how he regarded God's command and how he made his choice. What we Christians obtain at regeneration is God's life, a life which was possible for Adam to obtain, but he did not obtain it. Regeneration serves not only to restore man's spirit and soul from the original state of confusion and darkness but furthermore puts man in possession of the supernatural life of God.

Man's deadened, fallen spirit is made alive by receiving God's life imparted through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is regeneration. The basis upon which the Holy Spirit regenerates man is the cross (please read John 3:14-15). The eternal life in John 3:16 is the life of God which is put into man's spirit by the Holy Spirit. Because this life is God's life, which can never die, all who have been regenerated have this life and are said to "have eternal life." If God's life were to die, man's eternal life would immediately perish!

After regeneration, man's relationship with God is that of birth. Regardless of what happens, once a man has been born of God, God cannot deny that He has begotten him. Therefore, man, once born of God, despite how long eternity may be, has a relationship and position which cannot be canceled. Man obtains this through regeneration by believing in the Lord Jesus as Savior and not through his progress, spirituality, or holiness gained after believing in the Lord. What God gives to the regenerated ones is eternal life. Therefore, this position and life can never be annulled.

When man is regenerated, he obtains God's life. This is the starting point of a Christian life. This is the minimum for every believer. Whoever has not believed in the death of the Lord Jesus and received a supernatural life which he originally did not have, regardless of how zealously he may be progressing in the areas of religion, morality, and learning, is still a dead man in God's sight. All who do not have God's own life are dead.

With regeneration as the starting point, the spiritual life now has the possibility to grow. This rebirth is the first step in the spiritual life. At such a time the spiritual life is complete but not mature. The capabilities of this life are complete and able to reach the highest plane. However, because this life is newly born, it is not grown-up or mature. It is like a fruit which is green; the life is complete, but it is

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still unripe. The completeness is in its life capabilities, not yet in all of its organic parts. Man's regeneration is the same. After regeneration there is still an immensely great capacity in God's life that will allow him to advance unceasingly. From here on, the Holy Spirit can lead him forward until the body and soul are totally overcome.

## **TWO CATEGORIES OF CHRISTIANS**

The apostle in 1 Corinthians 3:1 classified all Christians as either spiritual or fleshy. A spiritual Christian is one who has the Holy Spirit dwelling in his spirit and ruling over his whole being. What then is a fleshy one? The flesh in the Bible signifies all of the nature and life of an unregenerated man—the totality of the unregenerated man, including all the matters belonging to his sinful spirit, soul, and body (Rom. 7:18). Therefore, a fleshy Christian is one who, having been reborn and having received God's life, is unable to overcome his flesh, and is instead overcome by his flesh. We have already seen that in a fallen man, his spirit is deadened, and he is governed by his soul and body. A fleshy Christian, therefore, is one who follows his soul and body to sin, act, and behave.

If after regeneration, a believer remains for a prolonged period of time in the flesh, God's saving way will not be manifested to be perfected in him. It is when he grows in grace to become spiritual that salvation is perfected in him. The saving way of Golgotha is that God has already prepared salvation for every sinner to be regenerated, and that every regenerated one may attain to the status of a spiritual man who is able to overcome the "old creation."

## **SECTION TWO**

### **THE FLESH**

#### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### **THE FLESH AND SALVATION**

The word flesh is *basar* in Hebrew and *sarx* in Greek. This word is often seen in the Bible and is used in various senses, but chiefly in reference to an unregenerated person. If we take a look at what Paul has said, we shall have a clear insight into its meaning. He said, "I am fleshy" (Rom. 7:14). It was not only his nature or merely any one part of his being which was fleshy; it was "I" as a person, the whole being of Paul was fleshy. In verse 18, in further clarification of his meaning, he declared, "In me, that is, in my flesh." It is very clear here that the flesh in biblical usage refers to all that is in man when he is still in an unregenerated state. Apart from such usage, it is sometimes used (1) in reference to the flesh of the human body, that is the soft part of the body besides the blood and the bones; (2) to denote the human body itself; and (3) to denote all the people of the world. These several different connotations

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are interlinked one with the other. In the beginning man was created a tripartite being, consisting of spirit, soul, and body. The soul, as man's personality and feeling, on the one hand, affiliates with the physical world through the body, and on the other hand, affiliates with the spiritual realm through the spirit. Thus, the soul has to decide whether to submit to the spirit, so as to be identified with God and His will, or to yield to the body and all the temptations of the material world. At the fall of man, the soul rejected the authority of the spirit and became enslaved to the body and its lustful desires. This is how man became fleshy. Since the spirit has lost its noble position and become a captive, and the soul is subjected to the power of the body, man is regarded in the Bible as being fleshy, even as having become flesh. As the soul is subjected to the flesh as its bondservant, so all that is of the soul has become of the flesh.

(1) The human body consists, as it is, of flesh, bones, and blood. Flesh is that part of the body which is full of consciousness, and it is through the flesh that we receive our feelings of the physical world. A fleshy person is therefore one who follows after his world-consciousness. What the flesh consists of is not "flesh" alone, although it includes "flesh," but also the man who walks after the consciousness of the "flesh."

(2) The human body, whether dead or living, is flesh. But in the spiritual sense, "flesh" refers to the body which is alive, and the life that makes the body alive. From the passage quoted below from Romans 7, we know that there exists a relationship between the sins of the flesh and the body of man: "But I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me a captive to the law of sin which is in my members" (v. 23). In chapter eight the apostle goes on to discuss how one can overcome the flesh. He says that if you wish to overcome the flesh, you need to put to death the practices of the body "by the Spirit" (v. 13). Although the flesh consists of the soul and the body, there is nevertheless a particular connection between the "flesh" and the physical flesh, that is the human body. Consequently, the Bible uses the word *sarx* in speaking of the flesh in the physical sense, and employs the same word in speaking of the flesh in the sense of the psyche.

(3) Whatever there is in man is born of the flesh, and for that cause he is fleshly. No man in the world is regarded by the Bible as non-fleshly for all men are subjected to the control of the flesh (comprising the soul and the body). They all walk after the sins of the body and the self of the soul. So when referring to all men, the Bible does not say all men but "all flesh." Since all men are fleshly, the word *sarx* is used in speaking of the carnality of man as well as of man himself.

## HOW DOES MAN BECOME FLESHLY?

The Lord Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). From this we can see that the Lord is speaking of three things: (1) What is flesh? (2) How does man become flesh? and (3) What is the nature of flesh?

What is flesh? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Who then is born of the flesh? Man. So man is flesh. Whatever a man may have inborn in him or may have derived from nature when he was born of his parents is flesh. However good he is, however virtuous he may be, whatever talents he may have, or however kind and intelligent he may be, he is fleshly. Regardless of how bad, how unholy, how foolish, how useless, or how cruel he may be, he is of the flesh. That man is flesh means that all that a man inherits by birth, whatever it may be (whether good or bad) is of the flesh. Whatever is inherited by him at birth, although it is only in its embryonic form and is later developed and becomes fully grown, is of

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the flesh.

How does man become flesh? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Man does not become fleshly by learning or practicing to be bad. Man is fleshly not because he sins gradually and becomes fleshly in due course of time. A fleshly man need not necessarily be one who is given to the indulgences of the flesh or one who does what pleases him and is completely controlled, suppressed, and subjugated by the evil desires of the body. The Lord Jesus said man is flesh the very moment he is born. So, to determine whether a man is fleshly, we need not look at his conduct or disposition. It is sufficient to take only one thing into account, and that is, of whom was he born? All men are begotten of human parents; therefore, they are born of man. Every man on earth is born according to the manner of men; that is, every human being is begotten of man. Thus, in the sight of God, all men, without exception, are flesh (Gen. 6:3), and on this account God on numerous occasions does not refer to men as men in the Bible, but to all men as "all flesh." Since all men are born of the flesh, can there possibly be anyone who is not the flesh? So, in view of the Lord's word, whether man is of the flesh is not dependent on any consideration other than whether he is born of the flesh. Man becomes flesh because he is begotten of blood, of the will of the flesh, and of the will of man. It is not his behavior or his parents' conduct that determines the kind of person he is.

What is the nature of the flesh? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." In any case, he who is born of the flesh is flesh. Educate him, reform him, cultivate him, regulate him with morality and religion—all these will not make him non-flesh, because that which is born of the flesh is flesh. Since he is born of the flesh, he is flesh and will remain as flesh, regardless of the amount of work or energy spent on him. If he is to be other than flesh, he has to be born otherwise than of the flesh, and since it is through the flesh that he is born, he will always and forever be flesh. Nothing further need be said if man is not born of the flesh. But if he is, then neither by any human means nor by the power of God or miracles can he be changed into something other than flesh. The Lord Jesus said man "IS" flesh, and the matter is settled for all time. The question of whether man is fleshly lies not in the man himself, but as is stated in the foregoing paragraphs, in of whom he is born, of what he is born. If he is born of the flesh, whatever programs may be employed to make him change will be of no avail, for he may change from one condition to another, and for that matter change from day to day, but he is still flesh, no matter how much he has changed outwardly or what condition he has changed into.

## THE UNREGENERATED MAN

The Lord Jesus has said that every unregenerated man, born but once of man, is flesh and is in the realm of the flesh.

During the time of unregeneration, men live in the lusts of their flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts, and are by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2:3) for "it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God" (Rom. 9:8). The soul is subjected to the allurements of the lusts of the body and in pursuit thereof commits many unspeakable sins. But since at this time man is dead unto God (Eph. 2:1), being dead in his offenses and in the uncircumcision of his flesh (Col. 2:13), he is not in the least conscious of his being in sin and is perhaps still proud of himself, thinking that he is still better than others. Indeed, when man is in the flesh, the passions for sins, which act through the law, operate in his members to bear fruit to death (Rom. 7:5). So, it is because he is "fleshy, sold under sin" (v. 14) that he serves "with the flesh, the law of sin" (v. 25).

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Because the strength of the flesh is exceedingly weak (although it is extremely strong in committing sins and fulfilling the desires of the mind), it cannot satisfy God in fulfilling any of His requirements. This is because the flesh is weak and cannot keep the law (Rom. 8:3). Not only is the flesh unable to fulfill the law of God, but it cannot even be subject to it, "because the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be" (v. 7). However, this is not to say that the flesh will indulge itself in any way it pleases and altogether ignore the things of God. As a matter of fact, there are fleshly men who have tried their best to keep the law. The Bible does not say that those who are in the flesh do not walk after the law, but rather it affirms that "out of the works of law no flesh will be justified" (Gal. 2:16). That those who are of the flesh do not keep the law is, of course, not unusual; it shows that they are of the flesh. However, what God has ordained is that a man is not justified by the law but by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:28). Therefore, even if a fleshly person tries to keep the law, this only serves to demonstrate that he submits himself not unto God but unto his own will, going about to establish another righteousness apart from the righteousness of God (10:3). It shows even more that he is fleshy. Anyway, "those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (8:8). The three cannots (that is, the flesh cannot keep the law, cannot subject itself to the law, and cannot please God) judge all fleshly men as to their sins.

In God's view the "flesh" is absolutely corrupt. Since the flesh is closely linked with lusts, the Bible often speaks of the "lusts of the flesh" (2 Pet. 2:18). Although the power of God is great, God is not able to change the nature of "the flesh" into something pleasing to Him. God Himself says, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh" (Gen. 6:3). The corruption of the flesh is beyond the power of God; it is something which God is unable to change. Neither is the Holy Spirit by striving against the flesh able to make it no more the flesh. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Yet men do not understand God's Word and intend to reform and improve the flesh. However, God's Word holds true forever. Because the flesh is in such a deplorable state before God, He warns His saints to hate "even the inner garment spotted from the flesh" (Jude 23).

God knows the actual condition of the flesh. He therefore knows that the flesh cannot be changed. He who intends to improve his own flesh, working through the process of self-denial so as to help the flesh to change for the better, is bound to fail. God knows that the flesh is incapable of change, improvement, or reform. So, although He wants to save the world, He does not set out with the task of changing the flesh, for even if He had undertaken this task, He would not have achieved it. God does not change the flesh of man but, instead, gives man a new life so that it may cooperate with Him to bring the flesh into death. The flesh must die—this is the way of salvation.

## GOD'S SALVATION

Romans 8:3 says, "For that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh..." This represents the true condition of the morally minded who constitute a portion of fleshy men. They may perhaps be willing enough to devote themselves to the keeping of the law, but they are fleshy. Being weak, they are incapable of keeping the whole law. These people come under one category. There is yet another category of men who do not keep the law of God at all. Their mind is the "mind set on the flesh" which is "enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be" (v. 7). However, the law decrees that he who keeps the law lives by the law, and he who does not keep it shall be condemned unto perdition. How much of the law must then be kept? The answer is the whole law, for "whoever keeps the whole law yet stumbles in one point has become guilty of all" (James 2:10).

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"Because out of the works of the law no flesh shall be justified before Him; for through the law is the clear knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). So the more man strives to keep the law, the more conscious he is of his being full of sins, incapable of keeping the law of God. Therefore, the first part of Romans 8:3 points out to us the condition of man and how sinful he is.

Since all men are sinful, God prepared to save them, and His way of salvation was by "sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin." His Son is without sin, so He alone is able to save. "In the likeness of the flesh of sin" refers to the birth of the Lord Jesus on earth, in which He took on a human body and identified Himself with humanity. God's own Son as the "Word" came "in the likeness of the flesh of sin," that is, He became flesh. This verse, therefore, speaks of incarnation. The important point contained herein is that He is the Son of God and He is without sin. The text does not say He was made "sinful flesh" but rather "in the likeness of the flesh of sin;" that is to say, He became flesh, having the likeness of the sinful body of man. Although He became flesh, He is still the Son of God and thus is still without sin. But as He also has the likeness of the sinful flesh of man, He is very intimately affiliated with sinners of the flesh in the world.

What was the purpose of the Lord's incarnation? It was to be made "a sacrifice for sin" (Rom. 8:3, Darby, margin); this is the work of the cross. God's Son is for the redemption of sin. Those who are fleshly sin against the law and cannot fulfill the righteousness of God, so they must perish and suffer the punishment for sin. However, the Lord came to the world, took on the likeness of the flesh of sin, and wholly identified Himself with all fleshly men. So, when He died on the cross, all fleshly men were judged to have received punishment for their sins in Him. He is sinless and need not have suffered punishment, but when He received the punishment, He had the likeness of sinful flesh. Accordingly, as the Head of a new race, He included all sinners in Him in suffering the punishment. This is insofar as punishment is concerned.

The fleshly men who were to receive the punishment now have in Him a sacrifice for sin. But what is to be done about the flesh that is filled with sins? He "condemned sin in the flesh." It was for sin that He died; thus God made the Sinless become sin on our behalf. When the Lord Jesus died, He died in the flesh, "being put to death in the flesh" (1 Pet. 3:18). When He died in the flesh, the sins borne by His flesh were crucified with Him. This is what is meant by "condemned sin in the flesh." In other words, it is "to judge sin in the flesh" or "to convict sin in the flesh." To condemn means to judge or to punish. The judgment and punishment for sin is death. What is meant here is that He put sin to death in the flesh. It can therefore be seen that when the Lord Jesus died, He not only died as a sacrifice for sin, suffering the punishment on behalf of men, but He also brought sin under punishment. As sin was condemned in the Lord's body at the time of His death, so is sin condemned in the flesh of him who is joined to the Lord's death; sin no longer has the power to harm him.

## REGENERATION

God's salvation, which saves people from the deserved punishment of the flesh and the power of the flesh, was accomplished in the cross of His Son. Now He places this salvation before every man, that whoever receives it may be saved.

God already knows that there is no goodness in man. The flesh cannot please Him. The flesh is utterly corrupted and irreparable. Because the flesh is absolutely beyond repair, God cannot expect man, after believing in His Son, to have anything to please Him if He does not give man something new,

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something other than the flesh. Therefore, when a man believes that the Lord Jesus died for him and receives the Lord Jesus to be his personal Savior, God gives him a new life, that is, His own uncreated life. This is what the Bible calls regeneration. God does not change our flesh; rather, He gives His life to us. Regardless of whether or not a man has been regenerated, his flesh is corrupted just the same. The flesh in a sinner is the same as the flesh in a saint. Although a man may be born again, his flesh does not become better because of the new birth. One's regeneration does not affect his flesh a bit and cannot improve him or make him good. No matter what, the flesh is the flesh, and it can never be changed. God does not use His life to educate and train the flesh. Rather, He uses the new life He gives to man to overcome the flesh.

This regeneration is a relationship of real birth between man and God. In the original text, the word born in the sense of to be born anew refers to giving birth, meaning we are born of God. Just as our fleshly body is surely born of our parents, so our spiritual life is also surely born of God. The meaning of giving birth is "to impart life." Therefore, to say we are born of God is to say we have received a new life from God. Just as we received our fleshly life at the time we were born of our parents, we also received our spiritual life at the time we were born of God. This life is a real life.

We already know that we human beings are fleshly—our spirit is dead; our soul controls our whole person; we act according to the lust of the body; there is not any goodness within. Therefore, when God saves us, He must restore in us the position of the spirit so that we may again have fellowship with God. Thus, when we believe in the Lord Jesus, God puts His own life into our spirit and resurrects our spirit. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). It is at this moment that the life of God, which is "the Spirit" referred to here, enters into our human spirit and causes our spirit to recover its position. From this point on, the Holy Spirit abides in the human spirit. Therefore, man is transferred into the spiritual realm. Now the spirit becomes alive and again renews its reign. The "new spirit" in Ezekiel 36:26 also refers to the new life we receive at the time of regeneration.

The condition for a man to be regenerated is not that he has to do a special work, but that he must believe into the Lord Jesus as Savior. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name, who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). Those who believe into the Lord Jesus as their Savior are born of God; they are the children of God.

Regeneration is the minimum basis of spiritual life. All later spiritual edification has regeneration as its foundation. Without regeneration a person has no spiritual life at all. Such a person cannot expect to grow in the spiritual life, because he does not yet have a spiritual life. Just as people in the world cannot build a house in the air, so also we cannot help an unregenerated person to grow. To teach an unregenerated person to do good and to worship God is to teach a dead person to do these things, because he has not yet received life. To do this is to attempt to repair and improve the flesh, that is, to do that which God cannot do. Every believer should definitely know that he has been regenerated, that he has received a new life that he did not have originally. Regeneration is not repairing the old flesh and changing it into the spiritual life. Regeneration is receiving a life that one absolutely did not have before. Unless a man is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. He can never see all the spiritual mysteries of God's kingdom and can never savor its taste. Regardless of how much he has changed, he has no other destiny than to wait for death and judgment.

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How can one know whether or not he has been regenerated? John 1 has already told us that a man is born anew because of his believing in the name of the Son of God and his receiving Him. The name of God's Son is "Jesus." Jesus means "He...will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Therefore, to believe in the name of the Son of God is to believe in Him as the Savior from sins, to believe that He died on the cross for my sins that He might save me from the punishment and power of sin, and thus to receive Him as my Savior. Therefore, if any man wants to know whether or not he has been regenerated, he only need ask himself whether he has come to the cross as a helpless sinner to receive the Lord Jesus as his Savior. If he has done so, he has been regenerated. All who believe in the Lord Jesus are regenerated.

## **THE WAR BETWEEN THE NEW AND THE OLD**

After a believer has been regenerated, it is most important for him to know how much he has received from his regeneration and how much is left of his natural endowment. Knowing these things will keep him advancing in his spiritual journey. Therefore, we need to explain here what is included in man's flesh and how the Lord Jesus in His redemption deals with the elements of the flesh. In other words, what does a believer receive when he is regenerated?

Romans 7:14 says, "I am fleshy, sold under sin." Verses 17 and 18 say, "sin...dwells in me...that is, in my flesh." After reading these two verses, we know that the elements of the flesh are "sin" and "me." This "sin" is the power of sin; this "me" is what we ordinarily call the "self." If a believer desires to understand the spiritual life, he should not be confused about these two elements of the flesh.

We know that the Lord Jesus has already dealt with the sin of our flesh on the cross. Therefore, the Bible tells us that "our old man has been crucified with Him" (Rom. 6:6). Therefore, concerning the problem of sin, the Bible never tells us to be crucified. Because this has been accomplished by Christ and has been fully accomplished, man need not do anything. Hence, the Bible asks us to count this matter as true (v. 11) so that we can receive the effectiveness of the death of Christ and thus be completely delivered from the power of sin (v. 14).

Although the Bible never tells us to be crucified for our sins, the Bible does tell us that we should bear the cross for our self. The Lord Jesus said many times that we should deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him. This is because there is a difference between the Lord's dealing with our sins on the cross and His dealing with our self. We know that the Lord Jesus bore our sins while on the cross (He had not done it before that time), but the Lord Jesus denied His self throughout His life, not just at the time He was on the cross. Therefore, a believer can overcome sin in a moment's time, but he needs his whole lifetime to deny himself.

The book of Galatians shows us very clearly the relationship between a believer and these two aspects of the flesh. On the one hand, it tells us, "But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts" (5:24). This means that on the very day a person belongs to Jesus Christ, his flesh has already been crucified. Without the teaching of the Holy Spirit, one might assume that the flesh is no longer there because his flesh has already been crucified. But on the other hand, the Bible also tells us, "Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (vv. 16-17). Here it reveals to us clearly that a person who belongs to Christ Jesus, one who already has the Holy Spirit abiding in him, still has the flesh. Not only does the flesh exist, but it is also especially powerful. How do we explain this? Are

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these two portions of Scripture contradicting each other? No. Verse 24 stresses the sinful aspect of the flesh, while verse 17 stresses the self aspect of the flesh. The cross of Christ deals with sin, and the Holy Spirit deals with self through the cross. Through the cross, Christ fully delivered the believers from the power of sin so that sin can no longer be the lord. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ abides in the believers so that they may daily overcome their self and utterly obey Him. The matter of being delivered from sin has already been accomplished, yet the matter of denying one's self is now being accomplished day by day.

If a believer understands the full salvation of the cross, then at the time of his regeneration (that is, when he receives Jesus as his Savior), he can, on the one hand, be completely delivered from sin and, on the other hand, receive a new life. Regrettably, many workers do not present God's full salvation to sinners. The sinners, therefore, only believe a half salvation and are only half-saved. Their sins have been forgiven, but they lack the strength to not sin again. Sometimes salvation is preached in a full way, but because the believers only care to have the grace of the forgiveness of sins and do not really care to be delivered from the power of sin, they only receive a half salvation.

If a believer at the time of his regeneration believes in a full salvation and therefore receives a full salvation, he will experience less defeat in battling sin and will have more experience of battling the self. However, this kind of believer is extremely rare. Although we dare not say how many there are, we can say there are very few. Most believers receive only a half salvation. Therefore, almost all of their battles are with sin. Moreover, there are some who, at the time of their regeneration, do not even know what the self is.

One's experience before regeneration also plays a part in this. Many people have the inclination to do good long before they believe. (Of course, they do not have the strength and are not able to do good.) Even though their consciences are comparatively brighter, their ability to do good is feeble. Consequently, conflict is inevitable. This is what people in the world call the conflict between reason and lust. When these people hear about full salvation, they sincerely accept the grace for deliverance from sin, just as they receive the grace for the forgiveness of sin. There is another group of people whose consciences are dark before regeneration. They sin terribly and are extremely evil; they never really try to do good. When they hear of full salvation, they naturally grasp the grace for forgiveness of sin and neglect (not reject) the grace for deliverance from sin. This kind of person will have the experience of battling with the sin in their flesh after they have been regenerated.

Why is this so? Because once a person is born again, once he receives a new life, this new life demands that he depart from the rule of the flesh to obey God. God's life is absolute. It must obtain complete authority. As soon as this life enters a man's spirit, it requires him to depart from his former master, sin, and completely obey the Holy Spirit. However, sin is deeply rooted in him. Although his will is being renewed because of the regenerated life, this will is still united with sin and self and therefore many times is still inclined toward sin. Due to this, a great conflict between the new life and the flesh is inevitable. Because there are a great number of people in this category, I want to pay special attention to their experience. However, I want to remind my readers that such a prolonged struggle and failure with sin (which is different from the self) is unnecessary.

The flesh wants to exercise complete control. The spiritual life also desires nothing short of this. The flesh seeks to have man forever subject to itself, while the spiritual life seeks to have man utterly obedient to the Holy Spirit. The flesh and the spiritual life are different in every respect. The nature of

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the flesh is that of the first Adam; the nature of the spiritual life is that of the last Adam. The motive of the flesh is earthly; the intention of the spiritual life is heavenly. The flesh is self-centered in all things; the spiritual life is Christ-centered in all things. Since they are so different, a person cannot avoid constant conflict with the flesh. The flesh seeks to lead man to sin; the spiritual life seeks to lead him to practice righteousness. Because the believers do not realize the full salvation of Christ, they often experience such an inward struggle after they have been regenerated.

When young believers discover such an inward conflict, they are really baffled. Some become discouraged, thinking they are too bad, with no way to go on. Some even doubt the genuineness of their regeneration because of this. They should have known that it was precisely because they were regenerated that they were having such a conflict. Formerly, the flesh exercised its control without any interference. Furthermore, because their spirits were dead, they did not sense that they were sinful, even though they had sinned much. Now the new life comes, bringing with it the heavenly nature, desire, light, and thought. Once this new light enters into man, it exposes how man is so basically filthy and corrupted. The new desire naturally is not willing to remain in corruption and filthiness but seeks to walk according to God's will. Then the flesh spontaneously desires to war against the spiritual life. Such a war makes a believer feel that there are two persons within him. Each has his own opinion and power and is trying to overcome the other. If he follows the spiritual life and overcomes, he will rejoice greatly, but if the flesh overcomes, he will not be able to avoid self-condemnation. This kind of experience is proof that such a one has been born anew.

God's purpose is not to improve the flesh, but rather to destroy the flesh. God gives His life to man at the time of regeneration for the purpose of destroying the self of the flesh through His life. Although the life that God gives to man is very powerful, a newly regenerated person is just like an infant. Because he is newly born, he is still very feeble. However, because the flesh has ruled over him for such a long time, its power is very great. Furthermore, he has not apprehended God's full salvation by faith. Therefore, at this juncture, although he has been born anew, it is still difficult for him not to be fleshly. To be fleshly means that he is still ruled by the flesh. The most pitiful thing is that although this man has been born again and the heavenly light has shined on him, and he knows that the flesh is hateful and he wishes with all his heart to overcome it, he is too weak in his own strength and is not able to do so. This is a time of much shedding of tears and much sorrow. Furthermore, every regenerated person must have a new desire to purge away sins in order to please God. However, his will is not strong enough, and he is overcome by the flesh most of the time. Consequently, his victories are few, but his defeats are many. How can he not hate himself at these times?

The experience Paul mentioned in Romans 7 is the story of such a conflict. "For what I work out, I do not acknowledge; for what I will, this I do not practice; but what I hate, this I do...For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not. For I do not do the good which I will; but the evil which I do not will, this I practice...I find then the law with me who wills to do the good, that is, the evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God according to the inner man, but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me a captive to the law of sin which is in my members" (vv. 15, 18-19, 21-23). The hearts of so many who have had the same experience will really respond in one accord with Paul's final sigh: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (v. 24).

What then is the meaning of this war? This war is also a kind of discipline by the Holy Spirit. God has already prepared a full salvation for man. Man does not obtain it either because he does not know of it

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or because he does not want it. God can only give to man according to what he believes, accepts, and appropriates. Therefore, when people ask for forgiveness and regeneration, God forgives and regenerates them. It is through such a war that God makes the believers seek after and hold fast to the complete victory in Christ. If a believer has not obtained such a full salvation because he does not know it, through such a war he will seek to know it. The Holy Spirit will then have a chance to reveal to him how Christ on the cross dealt with his old man so that this one may believe and may obtain it. If a believer does not have it because he does not want it, the truth he has is merely in his head. Through such a war he will know that simply to have the knowledge is useless. Since he fails repeatedly, this will create in him a desire to experience the truth he has known.

This kind of war increases as the days go by. If these believers do not easily give up but continue to press on faithfully, then they will have much fiercer battles. Unless they obtain deliverance, this kind of war will never cease.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE FLESHLY CHRISTIAN

Every believer can, like Paul, be filled with the Holy Spirit at the time he believes and is baptized (Acts 9:17-18). However, many believers do not truly believe as an accomplished fact that Christ has died and been resurrected for them, nor do they sincerely apply in practice the principle of death and resurrection which they are called by the Holy Spirit to obey. Hence, they still remain subject to the control of the flesh, just like those who have not died and been resurrected, although in fact, they have died and been resurrected according to what has been accomplished by Christ, and they should die to themselves and live to God according to their duty as disciples. This type of believer may be said to be abnormal. But abnormal believers are not found only today; they were already in existence at the time of the apostles. The Corinthians are a case in point, as we may see from what Paul said to them:

"And I, brothers, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to fleshy, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to receive it. But neither yet now are you able, for you are still fleshy. For if there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshy and do you not walk according to the manner of man?" (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

Here the apostle divides all Christians into two categories: the spiritual and the carnal or fleshy. Truly spiritual Christians are in no way extraordinary Christians; they are simply normal. It is rather that the fleshy Christians are the extraordinary ones for they are in reality abnormal. The Corinthians were already Christians, but they were not spiritual; rather, they were fleshy. Three times in this chapter of the Bible the apostle said they were fleshy. The apostle knew through the wisdom bestowed on him by the Holy Spirit that he should first know to which group they actually belonged before he could determine what the doctrinal truth was that should be ministered to them.

In the light of the Scriptures, regeneration is a birth. When one is regenerated, the spirit that lies hidden in the innermost part, the deepest part, of his being is renewed and indwelt by the Spirit of God. However, time is needed for the power of this new life to extend outward from the center to the circumference. Therefore, we cannot expect a babe in Christ to have the strength of the "young men" or the experience of the "fathers." In the case of a newly regenerated believer, even if he loves the Lord to the uttermost, is very fervent in his service, and goes on most faithfully with the Lord, time must still

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be given him so as to afford him the opportunities to better recognize the detestfulness of sin and self and to better understand God's will and way in the spiritual life. Of course, among these believers there are often some who really do love the Lord with exceeding fervor and greatly delight in the truth, but this still is nothing more than the operation of the emotion and the mind, untested by fire, and consequently not lasting. In any case, it is unavoidable for a newly regenerated believer to remain fleshly because he does not know the flesh even though he is filled with the Holy Spirit. One cannot eliminate the works of the flesh if he does not realize that these works are the products of the flesh. Hence, in reality many newly born believers are truly of the flesh.

The Bible does not expect a Christian who has just believed in the Lord to immediately become spiritual. However, if he makes no progress whatever for years, or even for decades, and stays in the position of a babe, this is not proper, and his case is most pitiful. After speaking about babes in Christ being of the flesh, the apostle proceeds to state that those who have remained as babes for a long time are also of the flesh. Of course, this is so. Prior to that, Paul considered the Corinthian believers as being of the flesh, as being babes in Christ, but even at that time they were still of the flesh. By that time they should have grown into adulthood, but on the contrary they had withered away, so much so that they remained babes. Consequently, they were still fleshly believers.

The time required for a believer to progress from the state of being fleshly to the state of being spiritual is not so long as some imagine today. Although not many years had passed since the Corinthian believers had become Christians, the apostle already considered them to have been babes for too long, to have been of the flesh for too long. He expected them to have long since become spiritual! The purpose of Christ's redemption is to remove all hindrances that the Holy Spirit may take full control of one's entire being and make him spiritual. Such redemption can never fail, nor is the power of the Holy Spirit ordinary. As a fleshly sinner can become a regenerated believer, so can a regenerated believer who is still fleshly become spiritual. What is most pitiful is that among the present-day believers there are some who have remained as babes not merely for several years but have continued to remain in their old selves for decades without any progress whatever. Moreover, even though there are some who are able to progress into a spiritual life in a few years, they are very surprised, thinking that this is unusual. Little do they know that this is normal —nothing more than normal —regular growth.

Readers, how many years have you believed in the Lord? And have you become spiritual? We should not become aged babes, thereby causing grief to the Holy Spirit and bringing loss to ourselves. As regenerated believers we should yearn for a completely spiritual life, and in everything we should let the Holy Spirit be the Lord and Master so that He may in the least possible time lead us into what God has prepared for us. On no account should we waste our time, making no progress at all. We can trace the reasons that a person remains a babe so long without any growth. Generally speaking, there are two reasons. One reason is that those who watch over the believers only pay attention to the grace of God and the position of the believers in Christ without encouraging them to pursue spiritual experience, or these overseers, not knowing the life in the Holy Spirit, are unable to lead those whom they watch over into a more abundant life. The other reason is that the believers themselves show little interest in the things of the Spirit, thinking that it is good enough merely to be saved; or they do not hunger and thirst after the things of the Spirit; or, after knowing the prerequisites, they are unwilling to pay the price because it is too high. Due to these causes, there are many such old babes in the church.

What are the characteristics of a fleshly person? The first is remaining as a babe for a long time (Heb. 5:11-14). The period of babyhood should not exceed a few years at the very most. A person is

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regenerated because he believes in the redemption accomplished for him by the Son of God on the cross. When he so believes, he should also believe that he has been crucified with the Savior and thus allow the Holy Spirit to release and deliver him from the power of the flesh. Ignorant of this principle, he will inevitably remain fleshly for many years.

The second characteristic of a fleshly person is the inability to receive spiritual teachings. "Brothers...I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to receive it. But neither yet now are you able." The Corinthians boasted of their great and lofty knowledge and wisdom. So far as we know, the church at Corinth was possibly the most knowledgeable of all the churches at the time. They were "enriched in...all knowledge" (1:5), and on that account Paul gave thanks to God for them. If Paul had then spoken to them the spiritual truths, they would have been able to understand every word. But all that they had would have only been in the mind! Although they had knowledge of all things, they did not have the power to express what they knew in their practical lives. Perhaps today there are many fleshly believers who know quite a few doctrines and may be able to impart spiritual truths to others, but they themselves are still not spiritual. True spiritual knowledge consists not of wonderful and profound thoughts but of such practical experience as may be gained in the spirit as a result of a union of the believer's life with truth. Intelligence is of no avail, nor is it enough to have a fervent desire for the truth. Rather, one must have a life that is completely obedient to the Holy Spirit before he can hope to be taught by the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, it is merely a case of conveying thoughts from one mind to another. Knowledge of this kind cannot make a fleshly person spiritual. On the contrary, his fleshly life will cause his knowledge to also become fleshly. What is lacking in this kind of person is not more spiritual teaching (the apostle felt that this hardly needed to be mentioned), but an obedient heart that is willing to submit one's life to the Holy Spirit, obey His command, and take the way of the cross. To such a person, spiritual knowledge only strengthens his carnality and helps him to deceive himself into thinking that he is spiritual. "Otherwise, how could I know so many spiritual things?" "But how many of the things you know are things you have learned from your daily life, and how many are just things you thought of in your mind?" May God be gracious to us!

There is another strong evidence of being fleshly. "For you are still fleshly." What is the reason? "For if there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly and do you not walk according to the manner of man?" (1 Cor. 3:3). The sins of envy and strife are evidences of being carnal. There was strife within the church at Corinth, and the believers variously claimed, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ" (1:12). Although there were some who contended for Christ, saying, "I [am] of Christ," this also was the work of the flesh. The disposition of the flesh is that of envy and contention. To exalt Christ in this kind of disposition is also of the flesh. Hence, any sectarian boasting is, at its very best, merely the babbling of babies. The divisions within the church are due to no other reasons except the lack of love and the walking according to the flesh, as what God has said here. Contending for the truth is only a pretext.

Sinners of the world are men of the flesh. Since they are not regenerated, they have their soul and body as their masters. Hence, they are of the flesh. If a believer is also of the flesh, then he is walking after the manner of men. Men of the world are naturally fleshly, and therefore, it may be excusable for a newly regenerated person to be of the flesh. But since according to the years you have believed in the Lord you ought to have long since been spiritual, why are you still walking after the manner of men?

To fail and sin frequently after the manner of men is an indication that a man is of the flesh. If a believer still cannot overcome his temper and his peculiar temperament and is still selfish, contentious,

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vainly emulative, unforgiving of others' trespasses, and short of love in speaking, then he is truly still of the flesh, regardless of how many spiritual truths he knows, how much spiritual experience he thinks he has gained, or how fervently and effectively he has worked.

Being carnal or fleshly means nothing other than to "walk according to the manner of men." We should ask ourselves if we have completely ceased to walk after the manner of men. If there are still many things in our life that bear the semblance of the worldly people, then we are still of the flesh. We should not dispute over a term as to whether we are spiritual or fleshly. If we are not governed by the Holy Spirit, what profit is there even if we are called spiritual? This is a question of life, not of name.

## SINS OF THE FLESH

The apostle's struggle in Romans 7 was a struggle against the sin that dwells within the body. He said, "For sin, seizing the opportunity...deceived me...killed me...I am...sold under sin...It is no longer I that work it out, but sin that dwells in me" (vv. 11, 14, 17, 20). When believers are still fleshly, they are usually overcome by the sin dwelling within, so that they have many battles and they commit sins.

The requirements of our body may generally be classified under three categories: nourishment, procreation, and defense. Before man's fall, these three matters were legitimate and without the contamination of sins. But after man fell and inherited the sinful nature, these matters became the media for the committing of sins. Since we need nourishment, the world makes use of eating and drinking to entice us. The first temptation that ever confronted mankind was in this very matter of food. Just as the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ensnared Eve then, so the pleasures of eating and drinking have become sins of the flesh today. We should not take the matter of food lightly, for too often many carnal believers have stumbled in this point. It was also because of the matter of eating and drinking that the Corinthian believers caused many of the brothers to stumble (1 Cor. 8). Hence, deacons and elders of the church at that time had to overcome in the matter of food (1 Tim. 3:3, 8). Only a spiritual man knows how unprofitable it is for one to be given to eating and drinking. So, whether one eats or drinks or whatever he does, he should do it all to the glory of God.

Second, after man's fall, procreation became the lust of man. In the Scriptures, lust and the flesh are particularly linked together. Even in the garden of Eden the sin of greediness gave rise to lust and shame. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians also linked these two together (6:13, 15). He also considered drunkenness as being related to uncleanness (vv. 9-10).

Finally, there is the matter of self-defense. When sin is in control, the body begins to show forth its strength in an attempt to preserve itself. Anything that threatens to destroy our peace, happiness, and comfort is to be opposed. Such fruits are anger and strife borne of man's so-called temper which have their origin in the flesh and are therefore sins of the flesh. Many sins have been produced directly and indirectly out of self-defense because sin is the motivating power within. It is for the preservation of one's personal interest, his personal existence, his personal reputation, his personal opinion, and a hundred and one things personal to himself, that many of the darkest sins of the world are produced.

If we analyze the numerous sins of the world one by one, we shall see that they are generally related to the three categories mentioned above. A fleshly Christian is one who is controlled by any or all of these three categories. Invariably, men of the world are all subject to the control of the sins of the body, but this is not surprising for they are not yet regenerated, but are still of the flesh. However, if a regenerated

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Christian incessantly vacillates between victory and defeat, is unable to deliver himself from the power of sin, and remains too long in the flesh, then he is abnormal. A believer should allow the Holy Spirit to search his heart so that he may be enlightened by God to know what things are forbidden by the law of the Holy Spirit and the law of nature, what things are obstructing him from the exercise of temperance and self-control, and what things are restricting him from serving God freely in the spirit. Unless these sins are removed, there is no possibility for him to enter into spiritual life.

## THINGS OF THE FLESH

The flesh has many outlets. On God's side, we have seen how it is at enmity with God and how it cannot possibly please Him. Nevertheless, unless it is revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, neither the believer nor the sinner can know that the flesh is so worthless, so hateful, and so defiled in the eyes of God. It is only when God, by His Spirit, reveals the true condition of the flesh to man that man can deal with the flesh according to God's view.

On man's side, the manifestations of the flesh are known by all. If one is not self-justifying and does not fulfill "the lusts of our flesh" (Eph. 2:3), he will surely see how defiled the manifestations of the flesh are on man's side. In Galatians 5:19-21 the sins of the flesh are compiled in a list so that there is no possibility for anyone to misunderstand. "And the works of the flesh are manifest, which are such things as fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, divisions, sects, envyings, bouts of drunkenness, carousings, and things like these."

By such a list of sins, the apostle says that "the works of the flesh are manifest." These works are clearly evident to those who care to see. Anyone who would like to know whether or not he is of the flesh needs only to ask himself if he has done any work of the flesh. One who is of the flesh need not commit all the works enumerated in this list before he is reckoned as being of the flesh. If he does only one of them, it is more than enough to determine that he is of the flesh, for if the flesh were no longer in authority, from whence could this one have come? The presence of any work of the flesh is evidence of the existence of the flesh.

The sins listed here may be roughly divided into five categories: (1) sins of the body that are extremely defiling, such as fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness; (2) sins of association with Satan and supernatural communications with him, such as idolatry and sorcery; (3) sins of temper and the temperament, such as enmities, strife, jealousy, and outbursts of anger; (4) sins of religious schisms or divisions, such as factions, divisions, sects, and envyings; and (5) sins of indulgence or intemperance, such as drunkenness and carousings. All these sins can easily be seen, and anyone who does any of these is of the flesh.

After we have divided these sins into five categories, we can see that some of the sins appear to be more respectable than others, and some more defiling. However, no matter how man may look at them, in God's view these sins all stem from the same root—the flesh—whether it be the defiled flesh or the civilized flesh. Believers who have constantly committed the most defiling sins will naturally realize that they are of the flesh. It is much more difficult with those who can overcome the comparatively more defiling sins. Most of them think they are better than others, and hence do not readily admit that they are still fleshly. They think that since they do not have the more defiling sins, they are no longer walking according to the flesh. Little do they realize that "the flesh is the flesh," no matter how civilized it may appear to be. Although "enmities...factions, divisions, sects" may appear to be cleaner

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in comparison with "fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,...carousings," they all are, nonetheless, fruits borne of the same tree. May we pray over these three verses one by one before God at this time, so that our eyes may be opened by the Lord to know ourselves. May we humble ourselves through such a prayer. May we pray until we weep and mourn for our sins, until we realize that we have merely assumed the name of a Christian, even the name of a spiritual Christian, when in reality our life is still filled with works of the flesh. May we pray until we are rekindled in our hearts and willing to cast off everything that is of the flesh so that His grace may be bestowed upon us.

The first step in the work of the Holy Spirit is to move one to convict himself concerning sin (John 16:8). Unless an awareness of sin is instilled in him by the Holy Spirit, a sinner will not be able to see the wickedness of his sins and flee from the future wrath unto obedience of Christ. But such a person must have an awareness of sin a second time; as a Christian, he must also convict himself concerning sin. If we do not realize the hatefulness and wickedness of the specific condition of our flesh, resulting in a sense of self-conviction, we shall never become a spiritual man. The sins committed by us may differ from person to person, but we are all of the flesh just the same. Oh, now is the time that we should humble ourselves in prostration before God and willingly allow the Holy Spirit to again cause us to convict ourselves of our sins.

### **THE NECESSITY OF DEATH**

The more a believer is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the more will he see the pitiful state of the flesh, and the fiercer will his battles against the flesh be, but all the more frequent and evident will his failures become. Whenever he suffers a defeat, the Holy Spirit will further reveal to him the sin and weakness of his flesh and generate in him a deeper sense of self-reproach and a determination to battle against the sin of the flesh. This chain reaction of misery may last a fairly long time, and one will ultimately be delivered only when he comes to understand the deeper works of the cross.

That the Holy Spirit leads a believer in this way through defeats and reproaches is deeply meaningful. Before the cross can perform any deeper work, man must first go through a process of preparation, to the end that he may accept the work of the cross without hindrance of any kind. The purpose of the Holy Spirit in leading the believer in this way is to prepare him.

From the experience of the believer, it can be seen that although God condemns the flesh as being corrupt beyond remedy, the believer himself thinks otherwise. He may in his mind be conscious that such is the evaluation of God, but he lacks the kind of spiritual insight to recognize that the flesh is truly defiled and corrupt. He may have supposed that what God says is true, but he still does not know that God's perception is never wrong. For this reason, the believer frequently attempts to mend the flesh. Such is the fact, although he does not openly say so.

Since many believers do not understand God's way of salvation, they try to overcome the flesh by making war against it. They think that victory or defeat is decided by the measure of strength available. Therefore, they hope with all their heart that God would grant them greater spiritual power to enable them to overcome their flesh. This kind of warfare may last a long time. However, there are always more defeats than victories without any prospect of a total conquest of the flesh in sight.

At this juncture, the believer proceeds, on the one hand, to fight his war and, on the other hand, tries to mend and improve the flesh, or to train and tame it. He prays; he reads the Bible; he institutes a number

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of rules and regulations in the hope that he will be able to subdue, change, and control the flesh. He lays down many ordinances, such as touch not, taste not, handle not, and the like, unconsciously thinking that corruption of the flesh is due to the lack of set rules, culture, and education, and that since he has put it through such spiritual training, it will give no trouble in the end. Little does he know that as to the subduing of the lusts of the flesh, these rules and regulations are absolutely ineffective (Col. 2:21-23).

While the believer is, on the one hand, seemingly trying to eradicate the flesh, he appears by his conduct, on the other hand, to wish to improve it instead. So under these circumstances, the Holy Spirit can only allow him to carry on with his war, to suffer defeat, to feel remorseful, and to engage in self-reproach, leading him through such situations a few times, even a score of times, until he realizes that the flesh is beyond remedy, that his own method is of no avail, and that there must be another saving way. What he knew in his mind of the corruption of the flesh, he has only now come to realize in his experience.

If the believer faithfully and sincerely believes the words of God and in all sincerity beseeches the Holy Spirit to reveal to him God's holiness so that he may, in the light of God's holiness, be able to see the true condition of the flesh, the Holy Spirit will certainly do so. In this way, he may be spared some of the agonies of the war he has gone through. However, such believers are few indeed! Man always desires to use his own methods and simply cannot bring himself to believe that he is really so corrupt. However, the lesson must be learned, so the Holy Spirit patiently allows him to learn of his self little by little through experience.

We have now seen that we cannot obey the flesh, nor can we mend or educate the flesh. No matter what spiritual method is employed, it simply cannot change the nature of the flesh one bit. Then what is to be done? The flesh must die. This is the way appointed by God. It must be through death and not in any other way. We want to wage war, to change, to make resolutions, and to use innumerable other methods to overcome the flesh, but God says that the flesh must die. If the flesh is dead, everything will be in order. It is not a matter of victory, but a matter of death.

This is very reasonable. The reason that we are fleshly is that we were born of the flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." From where it comes in, to there it will go out. The way of gain is the way of loss. Since we are born of the flesh, we are of the flesh. If we die, we are delivered from the flesh. Death is the one and only way. "For he who has died is justified from sin" (Rom. 6:7). Anything short of death will not do. Death is the only way of salvation.

Since the flesh is so defiled (2 Pet. 2:10), even God cannot change it. Apart from putting it to death, there is no other way. Even the precious blood of the Lord Jesus cannot cleanse the "flesh" of man. Thus in the Scriptures we find that the blood of the Lord Jesus only cleanses us from our sins, trespasses, and iniquities, and no mention is made of the cleansing of the flesh by the precious blood. The flesh has to be crucified (Gal. 5:24). Even the Holy Spirit cannot improve the flesh. That is why He does not dwell in the sinner, who is of the flesh (Gen. 6:3). Even when He dwells in the believers, His intention is not to help in the improvement of the flesh but to war against it (Gal. 5:17). "Upon man's flesh shall it [that is, the holy anointing oil as a type of the Holy Spirit] not be poured" (Exo. 30:32). With this in view, is it not a fact that many of our prayers are meaningless, those beseeching the Lord to enable us to change for the better, to progress, to be loving, and to better serve Him? And is it not a fact that so much of our hope is vain, the hope that we may subsequently attain sanctification,

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experience the Lord every day, and glorify His name in all things? Truly we should not try to mend the flesh so as to make it cooperate with the Spirit of God. The predestined end of the flesh is death. Only by committing the flesh to death can we have salvation. Otherwise, we shall forever remain as its bondservants.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE CROSS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT**

There are many believers—you can say the majority of the believers—who were not filled by the Holy Spirit when they believed in the Lord. On the contrary, after believing in the Lord for many years, they are still entangled by sins and have become fleshly believers. What we will talk about in the following portion concerning how the fleshly believer obtains salvation is according to the experience of the Corinthian believers and others like them. We are not saying that a believer must first believe in the substitutionary work of the cross and later believe in the uniting work of the cross. It is because many believers do not have the clear revelation of the cross from the beginning that they have only believed half of the truth. For this reason they need another chance to believe the other half of the truth. If the reader has completely believed the two sides of the work of the cross, this section will not be that deeply related to him. But if he is like the majority and has only believed half of the truth, this section will be indispensable to him. However, we want the reader to be clear that it is not necessary to believe the two sides of the work of the cross at separate times. It is because of the lack in man's believing that there is the need of believing the second time.

### **THE SALVATION OF THE CROSS**

After the apostle spoke concerning many items of the flesh in Galatians 5, he continued, "But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts" (v. 24). This is the way of salvation. What the believers pay attention to and what God pays attention to are very different. The believers are concerned about "the works of the flesh" (v. 19) which are the works, item by item, of the flesh. They are paying attention to sins individually: today's anger, tomorrow's jealousy, and the next day's strife. What they are sorrowful about and hope to overcome are certain sins. But these are simply fruits born of the same tree. You may pick one fruit—not to say that you cannot pick any one of them—and there grows another. One after another they grow without end, until eventually there will not be one day of victory. What God pays attention to is "flesh" (v. 24), not the works of the flesh. If a tree is dead, do we still fear that it will bear fruit? Believers always plan to deal with the offenses (fruits) and forget to deal with the flesh (the root). Therefore, it is unavoidable that one offense has not been dealt with clearly before another offense has already come. We need to deal with the root of sin.

The babes in Christ, being still of the flesh, should know more deeply the meaning of the cross. The work of God is to crucify the believer's old man with Christ so that those who are of Christ "have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts." No matter whether it is the flesh or the strong lust in the flesh, both are crucified on the cross. In the past it was through this cross that sinners obtained regeneration and knew that they had been redeemed by the Lord from their sins. Now it is also through this cross that the babyish, fleshly Christians—perhaps already regenerated for many years—can obtain salvation and be freed from the dominion of the flesh that they may walk according to the Holy Spirit and no longer walk according to the flesh, in order that they may become spiritual men before long.

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Thus the fall of man is in contrast to the work of the cross. The salvation afforded by the latter is the very remedy for the former. One being the sickness and the other the cure, they match one another perfectly. On one hand, the Savior died for the sinner on the cross to redeem him from sin so that the holy God can righteously forgive him. On the other hand, having died with the Savior on the cross, the sinner no longer is ruled by the flesh. Rather, his spirit regains the control, the body becomes the servant on the outside, and the soul is the medium in between. Thus, the original order of spirit, soul, and body is restored.

If we do not first understand what the death mentioned in this verse is, we will still not be able to receive salvation. May the Holy Spirit be our Revealer.

"But they who are of Christ Jesus" refers to everyone who believes in the Lord. Everyone who has believed in the Lord and has been regenerated belongs to the Lord. No matter what this person's spiritual level is and no matter how his work is, whether he has been freed from sin, has been fully sanctified, or has ever been overcome by the lust of the flesh, all do not matter. The thing that matters here is whether this person has ever been joined to Christ in life. In other words, has he been regenerated? Has he ever believed in the Lord Jesus as Savior? If he has believed, no matter what his present spiritual condition is, whether he is victorious or failing, this person has "crucified the flesh" on the cross.

It is not a question of ethics or spirituality; it is not a question of knowledge or work; it is only a question of whether he belongs to Christ. If he does, he has "crucified the flesh" on the cross—he "is" not crucifying nor "will" he crucify, but he "has" crucified.

We must have the right focus. This verse is not speaking concerning the matter of experience—regardless what your experience is—but is stating God's fact. "They who are of Christ Jesus," whether strong or weak, "have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts." You may say you are still sinning; God says you have been crucified on the cross. You say your temper still exists; God says you have been crucified on the cross. You say your lust is strong; God says your flesh has been crucified on the cross. Please do not pay attention to your experience now. Pay attention first to God's speaking to you. If, instead of listening to and believing in God's Word, you merely look at your own experience every day, you will never have the experience of the crucifixion of the flesh. Do not pay attention to your feeling and experience. Since God said your flesh has been crucified, it has indeed been crucified. We must hear and believe God's Word first—then we will have the experience. God said to you, "Your flesh has been crucified." You need to answer, "Amen! Yes, my flesh has been crucified on the cross." By doing this, you will see that your flesh has indeed been crucified.

The believers in Corinth committed adultery, had jealousy, strife, divisions, and lawsuits, and committed many other sins. They were fleshly. But they were "babes in Christ;" therefore they were still of Christ. Can it be true with even this kind of believer that their flesh has been crucified? Yes, even the flesh of these fleshly Corinthian believers has been crucified. How can this be?

We must realize that the Bible does not tell us to be crucified. Rather, it tells us that we are those who have been crucified, because it is not that we are to be crucified by ourselves but that we have been crucified with the Lord Jesus (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6). Since we are crucified with Christ, at the moment Christ was crucified on the cross, our flesh also was crucified on the cross. Also, our being crucified does not mean that we were crucified by ourselves but that the Lord Jesus, at the time when He was

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crucified, also carried us up onto the cross. Therefore, in God's eyes our flesh "has been crucified" on the cross. This matter, in the eyes of God, has clearly been done, has been accomplished, has already become a fact. Therefore, whether people have the experience or not, God's Word says, "They who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh." If we want to have the way to experience the crucifixion of the flesh, we do not need to pay attention to experience. Of course, experience is not wrong, but do not give it too much of a position. We need to believe God's Word. "God said, my flesh has been crucified—I believe my flesh has really been crucified." "God said my flesh has been crucified on the cross—I confess that God's Word is true." In this way we will have the experience. We must first pay attention to God's fact; then we pay attention to man's experience.

The flesh of those Corinthians, in God's eyes, had been crucified with the Lord Jesus on the cross. But they did not have the experience. The reason might be that they did not realize God's "fact." Therefore, the first step for us to receive salvation is to deal with the flesh according to God's point of view. It is not that the flesh is going to be crucified on the cross but that it has already been crucified, not according to what we see, but according to what we believe—God's Word. If we are firm on this point—the flesh has been crucified—we will be able to go on to deal with the flesh in our experience. Unless we do not care for all our spiritual progress and stand firm on this fact, considering that in any event our flesh has been crucified on the cross, there is no possibility for us to have the real experience. Those who want to have the experience should not care first for their own experience but only believe in God's Word. Then they can obtain the experience.

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT AND EXPERIENCE**

"For when we were in the flesh, the passions for sins...operated in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we...having died..." (Rom. 7:5-6). Therefore, the flesh can dominate us no more.

We have already believed and confessed that our flesh has been crucified on the cross. Now—not before this—we should pay attention to the question of our experience. Even though we may pay attention to experience, we still hold fast the facts we have before God because what God has accomplished for us and our experience of the accomplishment of God are two inseparable matters.

God has already done all that He could do; He has already accomplished all. Now, the only questions are how do we deal with what He has done and what is our attitude toward what He has accomplished. He has crucified our flesh on the cross, not just in term, but in reality. If we are willing to believe and willing to exercise our will to choose what God has accomplished for us, that very matter will become experience in our life. There is no need for us to accomplish it, because God has already accomplished everything. There is no need for us to crucify our flesh, because God has already crucified it on the cross. Now the questions are whether we believe that this is real and whether we want this to be accomplished in our life. If we believe it and we want it, we need to work together with the Holy Spirit to obtain this experience. Colossians 3:5 says, "Put to death therefore your members which are on the earth." This is the way to have the experience. The word "therefore" follows the foregoing portion. Verse 3 says, "For you died." This is what God has accomplished for us. "For you died." "Put to death therefore your members which are on the earth." The first death is a positional fact which we have in Christ. The second death is the real experience which we possess. We can see the relationship between these two deaths. The failure of the believers in the flesh is because of not seeing the relationship of these two deaths. Some only want to put to death their flesh, first paying attention to their experience of death, but the more they put to death their flesh, the more alive their flesh is. Some only know that their

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flesh has been crucified with the Lord Jesus on the cross and do not pursue the practice. In both cases they cannot have the experience of crucifying the flesh.

If we want to put our members to death, we must have a basis. Otherwise, even though we eagerly pursue experience, relying vainly on our own efforts, we will not have the experience. We believers who know that the flesh has died with the Lord and do not apply what the Lord has accomplished for us will see that the knowledge of the believers is also of no avail. In order to put the flesh to death, we must first understand co-death. Having known co-death, we must practice putting to death. These two go together and support one another. If we are only satisfied with knowing the fact of co-death, thinking that now everything is spiritual and the flesh has been extinguished, we deceive ourselves. On the contrary, if while putting to death the evil deeds of the flesh, we pay too much attention to the evil deeds and do not take the attitude that our flesh has already died, this also is in vain. If while putting to death the flesh, we forget that death already took place, nothing can be put to death. "You died"—you died with the Lord Jesus because, when the Lord Jesus died, He crucified your flesh on the cross. "Therefore," you now need to practice applying the death of the Lord to put to death all the practices of the members. This "putting to death" is based upon "you died." To put to death means to apply the death of the Lord Jesus to execute the death sentence on every member. The death of the Lord is the most authoritative death, the most fatal death, and whatever meets it cannot but die. Since we are identified with His death, if temptation is in any of our members and lust is going to operate, we can apply this death to deal with that member and cause it to die instantly—to put it to death.

The death in which the believer is joined with the Lord has already become a reality in his spirit. (The death of Christ is a most powerful and active death.) Now the believer should bring that definite death out of his spirit to deal with all the activities in his members because the lust in his members can operate at any moment. This kind of spiritual death is not once for all. Whenever the believer is not on the alert or loses faith, the flesh will operate again. If the believer wants to have his whole being conformed to the Lord's death, he must often put to death the deeds of his members so that that which is in the spirit can also reach his body.

But how can we have power to apply the Lord's death to our members? Romans 8:13 says that "by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body." A believer who wants to put to death the practices of the body must depend on the Holy Spirit to make his co-death with Christ become experience. When a believer puts to death the practices of his body by the Lord's death, he must believe that the Holy Spirit will cause the death of the cross to become real in the particular matter which he wants to put to death. The crucifixion of the believer's flesh with Christ on the cross is an accomplished fact. There is no need to crucify it again. Nevertheless, if the evil deeds of the body seem about to operate, then the Spirit should be there to apply the death which the cross of the Lord Jesus has accomplished for us to that very evil deed that it might be put to death by the power of the Lord's death. The evil practices of the flesh at all times and in every place are ready to come out and be manifested from our body. Therefore, unless the Spirit empowers the believer with the power of the holy death of the Lord Jesus, the believer cannot overcome. If the believer can put to death his practices in this way, the indwelling Holy Spirit will be able to accomplish God's purpose that the body of sin might be annulled (6:6). When the baby believers know the cross in this way, they can be liberated from the dominion of the flesh and be joined to the Lord Jesus in the life of resurrection.

From here on the believers should "walk by the Spirit" and "by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). We must take notice that no matter how much the death of the Lord is rooted and grounded

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in our life, we cannot expect, even for an hour, that we will not have to be watchful in order to prevent the practices in our members from rioting in us. Whenever a believer is not walking by the Spirit and being led by the Spirit, right away he is walking by the flesh. The real condition of the flesh which God reveals to us in Romans 7, after verse 5, is the real condition of the believer himself. If for one moment the believer stops walking by the Spirit, he right away becomes the kind of person about whom we are speaking. Since Romans 7 stands between chapter six and chapter eight, some people consider that once a believer has passed through chapter seven and has entered into the Spirit of life in chapter eight, chapter seven will become merely a past history. But in reality chapter seven and chapter eight are simultaneous and parallel. Whenever the believer does not walk according to the Holy Spirit in chapter eight, there immediately is the experience of chapter seven. Therefore Paul says in verse 25, "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin." "So then" is the conclusion of all his speaking concerning experiences before 7:25. Before verse 24 he was a failure. Not until verse 25 is he victorious. But, it is after he failed and then gained the victory that he said, "With the mind I myself serve the law of God," which means that what God wants is my new life. "With the flesh, the law of sin" means that no matter how he served the law of God with his mind, his flesh always served the law of sin. And no matter how he was freed from the flesh, his flesh always served the law of sin (v. 25). The meaning here is that flesh is always flesh. No matter how our life in the Holy Spirit is growing and rooted, the flesh has not changed its nature and still serves the law of sin. Therefore, even though we do not walk according to the flesh, in order to be led by the Spirit of God (8:14) and be freed from the oppression of the flesh, we always need to put to death the practices of the body and walk according to the Holy Spirit.

### **THE EXISTENCE OF THE FLESH**

We need to realize that even though we can put to death the flesh and cause it to be annulled (original Greek meaning for "destroyed" in Rom. 6:6 [KJV]), it nevertheless still exists. A very great mistake that people make is that they think that they have extinguished the existence of sin and have uprooted the flesh from within them. This kind of doctrine leads people astray. The regenerated life does not change the flesh. The crucifixion together with Christ does not cause the flesh to disappear. The Holy Spirit who indwells our spirit does not force people to not walk according to the flesh. Whether it is the flesh or "the fleshly nature" as people have called it, it always exists within the believer. Whenever the believer fulfills the condition for it to work, it operates right away.

We have seen how much man's body is associated with the flesh. Therefore, before we are separated from this body, we can never be separated from our flesh such that it has no possibility to operate again. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Before the transfiguration of our body, which we received by birth from Adam's corruption, we shall by no means have the flesh eradicated from within us. Our body has not been redeemed yet (Rom. 8:23). We have to wait until the Lord's second coming to have this redemption (1 Cor. 15:22-23, 42-44, 51-56; 1 Thes. 4:14-18; Phil. 3:20-21). Therefore, as long as we are in this body for one day, for one day we cannot avoid watching and guarding against all the activities of the flesh in the body.

We should know that our walking may, at most, be like Paul's. He said, "For though we walk in flesh, we do not war according to flesh" (2 Cor. 10:3). Because he still had the body, he still walked in the flesh. But, due to the corruption and wretchedness of the flesh and its nature, he did not "war according to flesh." Although he walked in the flesh, he did not "walk according to the flesh" (Rom. 8:4). Before

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the believer is separated from his body, he can by no means be separated from the flesh. Physically speaking, he lives in the flesh (Gal. 2:20). Spiritually speaking, he does "not war according to flesh." If Paul still had the flesh according to which he might war (only he did not do that), who would dare to say that he did not have "flesh"? Therefore, both the cross and the Holy Spirit are needed at all times.

Because of the great importance of this point, we cannot be inattentive. Otherwise, believers will fall into hypocrisy or idleness, thinking that their flesh is gone, that they are therefore perfectly holy, and that there is no need of watchfulness. Herein is a fact: children born of regenerated and sanctified parents are also fleshly and need to be regenerated even as the worldly people. No one can say that the children born of sanctified believers are not fleshly and have no need of regeneration. The Lord Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). If what is born is flesh, this proves that the one who begets it is also flesh! This is because flesh only gives birth to flesh. Therefore, the children's being fleshly proves that the parents are not yet free from the flesh. The reason saints pass the fallen nature on to their children is that they had this fallen nature originally. They are not able to pass on to them the divine nature which they received in regeneration, because this divine nature is not their own but is obtained by each one through grace from God. The reason that the believers' children have a sinful nature is that the believers have a sinful nature and have passed it on to them. This obvious fact proves that the sinful nature in the believers exists.

In view of this, we know that a person who is a new creation in Christ is not recovered in this life to the position of Adam before his fall, simply because of, not to mention other things, the fact that his body has not been redeemed (Rom. 8:23). Even a man in the new creation still has a sinful nature and still has the flesh. Sometimes his feelings and his desire are not perfect and are mostly more base than those of Adam when he was sinless. Unless man's flesh has been rooted out from within man, he can never have the perfect feeling, desire, and love. Man can never reach the position of having no possibility of sinning because the flesh still exists. If a believer does not walk according to the Holy Spirit and still gives ground to the flesh, the flesh will exercise its dominion again. However, we should not despise the salvation which Christ has accomplished. There are many places in the Bible which tell us that whatever is born of God cannot sin. This means that whoever is born of God and filled with God has no inclination to sin. It does not mean that there is no possibility of sinning. When we say wood cannot sink, it means that wood has no tendency to sink rather than that wood has absolutely no possibility of sinking, because if wood is soaked in water for many days, it may sink. The hand of a child may also cause it to sink. But the nature of wood is that it does not sink. In the same way, God saves us to the degree that we have no inclination to sin but does not save us to the degree that we have no possibility of sinning. If the believer is still filled with the intention to incline to sin, this proves that he is still fleshly and has not obtained full salvation. The Lord Jesus will cause us not to incline to sin. Meanwhile, we still need to be watchful because, if we are contaminated by the world or tempted by Satan, there is still the possibility of sinning.

A believer should realize that, on the one hand, he is a new creation in Christ, having the Holy Spirit dwelling in his spirit, having the death of Jesus working in him, and having the sanctifying life, but that, on the other hand, he still has the sinful flesh and can still sense the existence of the flesh and its filthiness. He has the sanctifying life because he, by the Holy Spirit with the death of the cross, puts to death the practices of his members so that the flesh cannot act, not because he has no flesh. After seeing the fact that a believer passes on his sinful nature to his children, we know that what we have obtained is not the natural perfection of Adam when he was sinless. We also know that the existence of the flesh does not cause the believers to become no more sanctified.

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All the believers should admit that even those believers who are the most holy also have times of weakness. Sinful thoughts may enter into their mind unintentionally, words may come out of their mouth unconsciously, they may feel that it is hard to surrender their will to the Lord, and they may have confidence in themselves. All these are works of the flesh. If a believer is under the control of Christ and does not make provision for the flesh, he will have a lasting experience of overcoming the flesh. Therefore, a believer should know that the flesh may regain its power at any moment. The flesh has not been eradicated from the body, but, because we have presented ourselves to the Lord (Rom. 6:13), the body has left the control of the flesh and has come under the control of the Lord. If a believer walks according to the Holy Spirit (this refers to the attitude of not letting sin reign in our body—v. 12), no matter what sin devises, it cannot cause the believer to stumble. Rather he is always free. In this way the body is not reigned over by the sinful nature and is free to be the temple of the Holy Spirit and to do the holy work of God. The way the believer obtains his freedom is the way he keeps his freedom. Because the believers answer God with the vital "yes" and answer the flesh with the vital "no," accepting the Lord's death, they obtain freedom. Therefore in this life, before the separation from the body, this "yes" to God and "no" to the flesh have to always continue. Not one believer at this time can reach a position of not being tempted. Therefore, good discernment, watchfulness, prayer, and sometimes fasting are necessary that he may know how to walk according to the Holy Spirit.

However, the believer should not lower God's purpose and his own expectation. It is possible for the believer to sin, but he must not sin. The Lord Jesus has died for us and has crucified our flesh with Him on the cross, and the Holy Spirit has indwelt us in order to manifest in us the reality of what the Lord Jesus has accomplished. We have the absolute possibility of not being under the control of the flesh. Its existence is to call us to be watchful but not to make us surrender. The cross has completely crucified the flesh. If we are now willing to put to death the practices of our body by the Holy Spirit, we will experience the accomplishment of the cross. "So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh; for if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live" (Rom. 8:12-13). Since God has such grace and such a way of salvation, if we make the mistake of still living according to the flesh, it our responsibility. Since we have such a salvation, it is no longer as though we are debtors to the flesh and are obliged to pay it. Now we do not have to. If we still live according to the flesh, it is because we want to, not because we ought to.

Among many matured saints, there is a long period of complete victory. The flesh exists, but its effect amounts to zero. Its life, nature, and activity have been put to death by the believers with the Lord's death through the Holy Spirit so that the flesh is in the position of existing yet as if not existing. Because the work of putting to death is so deep and so real and because the believer is so faithful in following the Holy Spirit in a lasting way, the flesh, although it exists, is made powerless to resist, and it even seems difficult to have it come again to excite the believer. Such a complete victory over the flesh is attainable to every believer.

Now here is a warning: "For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." Because salvation is complete, there is no excuse for rejecting this salvation. All that matters here hinges on the two "ifs." God, on His side, can no longer do anything; He has accomplished all. Now it is only up to man, on his side, how he will deal with God's work. Although you have been regenerated, "if you live according to the flesh, you must die." You will lose your spiritual life; you will be living yet will be as dead. "If by the Spirit" you live, you also must die, but die in the death of Christ. If by the death of Christ you put to death all the practices

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of the flesh, that is real death. However, if you do not die in this way, you will die the other way. Either way, you must die. Which death, then, do you want? When the flesh lives, the Holy Spirit (in reality) cannot live. Which one, then, do you want to live? What God has arranged for you is to put all the ability and activity of your flesh under the power of the death of the Lord Jesus' cross. What you are lacking now is nothing but death. You should talk less about life and talk first about death, because if there is no death, there is no resurrection. Are you willing to obey the will of God? Are you willing to let the cross of Christ be experiential in your life? If so, you should, through the Holy Spirit, put to death all the practices of the body.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE BOASTINGS OF THE FLESH**

#### **THE OTHER ASPECT OF THE FLESH**

Do the aforementioned items include all the works of the flesh? Besides these, are there any more works of the flesh? Is the flesh no longer active under the power of the cross? What has been said earlier mainly stresses the aspect of the sins of the flesh, that is, the lusts of the human body, but not yet the other aspect of the flesh. We have stated before that the flesh includes the works of the soul and the lusts of the body. Concerning the body, we have already had a thorough discussion. However, we have not spoken clearly concerning the soul. As to the body, the believer should be rid of all its defiling sins; as to the works of the soul, which are no less corrupt in God's eyes than those of the body, the believer should also reject them.

According to the Bible, the works of the "flesh" are divided into two kinds (although both are the works of the flesh): the unrighteous and the self-righteous. The flesh begets not only sins but also righteousness. The flesh is not only vile but can also be quite noble. The flesh not only has lusts but also good thoughts. This is what we shall consider now.

The Bible uses the word flesh as a designation of man's corrupted nature or life—the soul and the body. When God created man, He put the soul between the spirit and the body, that is, between what is divine or spiritual and what is sensual or physical. The responsibility of the soul is to blend the spirit and the body, giving each its proper place and enabling them to communicate with each other so that through this perfect harmony man may ultimately have the oneness of the spirit and the body. However, the soul, yielding to the temptations that arise from the senses, escapes from the authority of the spirit and comes under the control of the body. These two—the soul and the body—are then joined together to become "flesh." The flesh is not only "without the spirit," but also opposes the spirit. The Bible says, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit" (Gal. 5:17).

The opposition of the flesh to the spirit and the Holy Spirit is of two sides. When the flesh commits sins, rebels against God, and breaks the law of God, it is clearly opposed to the spirit. When the flesh performs good deeds, obeys God, and does the will of God, it is also at enmity with the spirit. Since the "body" part of the flesh is naturally filled with sin and lust, when it expresses itself, it commits a multitude of sins and grieves the Holy Spirit. However, the "soul" part of the flesh is not as defiling as the body. The soul is the principle by which man lives; it is also his very self which is composed of the faculties of his will, mind, and emotion. From the viewpoint of man, the works of the soul may not be

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altogether defiling. The soul focuses only on one's own ideas, thoughts, preferences, and feelings. Its works may not altogether be the committing of defiling sins; it only centers upon the self. Independence and self-support are the characteristics of the works of the soul. Even though the conduct of this part of the flesh is not as defiling as that of the other part, it is still at enmity with the Holy Spirit. Since the flesh wants to have the self as the center, self-will rises above the will of God. Although it is serving God, it does not serve according to God's way but according to its own idea. It does whatever is good in its own eyes. Self is the principle of all its conduct. Although the flesh may not have committed anything that man considers as sins—on the contrary, it may try its best to keep God's commandments—"self" is the center of all the activities. The deceitfulness and the strength of this self are beyond man's expectation. The flesh is at enmity with the Holy Spirit not only in the matter of sinning against God but even in the matter of serving God and pleasing God, for it is done out of its own strength, not by being led simply by the Spirit and depending entirely on the grace of God. Thus it is at enmity against the Holy Spirit and quenches the Holy Spirit.

We can find many people around us who are by nature very good, very patient, and very loving. What believers hate is sin, and if they could be delivered from it so that they would no longer have the things of the flesh as mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21, then that would be good. What they aspire to is righteousness, so with all their strength they try to do righteous deeds, desiring to have the nine-in-one fruit recorded in Galatians 5:22-23. But herein is the danger. The believers have not learned to hate their flesh—the entire flesh—but hope only to be freed from sins, which issue out from the flesh. They know to reject the activities of the flesh, but they do not know that the flesh itself should be destroyed. The important point is that the flesh not only commits sins, it can also perform good deeds. If the flesh is still doing good, then it is still alive. If a man were to die, his ability to do good as well as to do evil would die with him. If he is still able to do good, he is certainly not yet dead.

We know that all men are of the flesh. According to the teaching of the Bible, there is no one in the world who is not of the flesh, because all sinners are born of the flesh. But we know that many people before they are regenerated, or even many who never believe in the Lord and are never regenerated, have done many righteous deeds. They are very loving, patient, and good. It seems they have been like this ever since they were born. They may be so good, but, based on the word of the Lord Jesus in John 3:6, they are still of the flesh. This fact proves to us that the flesh can indeed do good.

The apostle spoke to the Galatians: "Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (3:3). This word shows that the flesh is capable of doing good. The believers in Galatia fell into the error of doing good by the flesh. They had begun in the Holy Spirit, but they did not continue to be made perfect by the Holy Spirit. Instead they planned to do their own righteousness, even the righteousnesses of the law, in order to be made perfect. Thus, the apostle asked them such a question. Therefore, we see very clearly that the flesh is capable of doing good works. If the Galatian believers could do only evil by their flesh, Paul would not have needed to ask them, for they themselves would have known that the sins of the flesh could not make perfect what they had begun in the Holy Spirit. Since they wanted to perfect by their flesh the work that the Holy Spirit had begun, this proves that they wanted to arrive at a position of perfection through the righteous deeds of the flesh. They had truly tried to do righteous deeds with all their strength, but here the apostle shows us clearly that the righteous deeds of the flesh are greatly different from the works of the Holy Spirit. What one does by the flesh one does by himself; such works cannot perfect the works which the Holy Spirit has begun.

In the preceding chapter the apostle had spoken a weighty word: "For if I build again the things which I

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have destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor" (Gal. 2:18). This word is speaking of those who, having been saved and having received the Holy Spirit, wanted to depend on the flesh—the self—to do the righteousness of the law (vv. 16-17, 21). "The things which I have destroyed"—this means that the apostle had always considered man as being unable to save himself by his own works. The apostle always tore down the works of sinners because he considered their works as being unable to save them. "If I build again"—this means to build again now. The apostle seemed to be saying, "You cannot be saved by your own works, but you have been justified by believing in the Lord." If we build anew the righteous deeds which have been torn down previously, thinking that we should now do righteousness by ourselves, we prove that we are transgressors. Just as we sinners cannot receive life through the works of the law, so also, after having received life we cannot be perfected through the righteous deeds of our flesh. If there were such a thing, it would prove that he, the apostle, is a transgressor. This proves to us how vain are the righteous deeds of the flesh!

Moreover, we see in Romans 8 that "those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (v. 8). Thus we know that those who are in the flesh have tried to please God. Of course, trying to please God is also a righteous deed of the flesh, except that such deeds cannot please God. We should have a deep realization that the flesh is quite capable of doing righteous deeds. In fact, it is very capable of doing righteous deeds. Because we often think that the "flesh" means the lusts, we consider it altogether as defiling as lusts. Of course, as far as the body is concerned, the flesh includes the lusts. But as far as the soul is concerned, all the activities of the will, the mind, and the emotion are not necessarily as defiling as lusts. Moreover, the term lust in the Holy Bible is not necessarily one of defilement, because Galatians 5:17 says, "The Spirit against the flesh," meaning that the Holy Spirit lusts against the flesh. Therefore, lust in the Bible is not altogether defiled; to lust simply means to have a strong desire.

All that a man has done or is able to do before regeneration is the work of the flesh. Therefore, the flesh not only can do evil but also can do good. The mistake of the believer is here: he only knows that he should eradicate the evil in the flesh, but he does not know that he should also eradicate the good in the flesh. He does not realize that as the evil acts of the flesh belong to the flesh, so the good deeds of the flesh also belong to the flesh. The flesh is flesh and remains flesh whether it does good or does evil. Hence, the danger of the believer lies in that he is ignorant of or unwilling to get rid of all that belongs to the flesh; he only knows or is willing to get rid of the evil in the flesh. The lesson now is that the good of the flesh is no less fleshly than the evil of the flesh. Both belong to the flesh. If the goodness of the flesh is not eradicated, no matter what the believer does, he cannot be delivered from the power of the flesh. Moreover, since the flesh can do good and if the believer allows it to do good, he will soon see the flesh doing evil also. If self-righteousness is not eradicated, unrighteousness will soon follow.

### **THE NATURE OF THE GOOD WORKS OF THE FLESH**

God is very much against the flesh because He knows the actual condition of the flesh. God's purpose is that the believers would be completely free of the old creation and enter completely into the new creation in experience. Whether good or evil, the flesh belongs to the old creation. There is a big difference between the good that the flesh does and the good that comes out of the new life. The flesh is centered on the self; it can do good by itself and does it with its own strength. It has no need to depend on the Holy Spirit, no need to be humble, no need to wait upon God, and no need to pray and beseech God, but only has to decide by itself, think by itself, and perform by itself. Naturally, it is inevitable that it accredits glory to itself, telling itself, "Now I am much better than before!" "Now I am

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really quite good." Moreover, such deeds do not lead people to come to God but instead cause them to become puffed up in secret. God wants man to come completely helpless before Him, submitting wholly to His Holy Spirit and waiting on Him humbly and trustfully. The goodness of the flesh which centers on the self is always evil in the eyes of God because it is not the work of the Holy Spirit, and it does not issue from the life of the Lord Jesus. Rather, it is the work of man's own self, and the glory is ascribed to himself.

In Philippians 3:3 the apostle mentioned "confidence in the flesh." "Confidence" in the original text is "belief." He said that he himself did not "believe in the flesh." The greatest work of the flesh is self-confidence! Since one thinks he is able, he does not need to trust in the Holy Spirit. Christ crucified is the wisdom of God, but a believer trusts in his own wisdom. He can read the Bible, preach the Bible, hear the Word, and believe in the Word; however, all of these are done through the power of his own mind, and he does not think that he absolutely must ask for the Holy Spirit to teach him. Many people believe they have received all the truth, even though what they have is something which they have received from others and from their own searching and what they have is more of man than of God! Furthermore, they do not have a teachable heart that is willing to wait on God and to let Him reveal His truth in His light.

Christ is also the power of God. But how much self-reliance there is in Christian work! The time spent in the employment of human methods and arrangements is more than the time spent waiting before God. The time spent on preparing the items and sections of the message far exceeds the time spent on receiving the power from above. It is not that we do not proclaim the truth or that we do not confess the person and work of Christ as our only hope or that we do not want to glorify His name, but that, because our confidence is in the flesh, many of our works are dead before God. In our speaking we rely on human wisdom to present a doctrine in a full way. We use appropriate illustrations and various kinds of expressions to stir up men's emotions. We also use wise exhortation to cause men to make a decision. However, where is the real result? In this kind of work, how much is the reliance on the Holy Spirit and how much is the reliance on the flesh? How can the flesh give life to man? Does the old creation actually have sufficient power to help man become the new creation?

Self-confidence and self-reliance are the nature of the good works of the flesh. "Dependence" on God is something the flesh cannot have. The flesh is too impatient to tolerate the delay of being dependent. The flesh can never depend on God as long as it feels it has the strength. Even in a time of hopelessness, the flesh is still busy planning, trying to think of a way out. The flesh never has the sense of utter helplessness. If the believers want to understand the works of the flesh, there is no other need than to put the flesh to the test. Anything that does not issue from waiting on God is of the flesh. Anything that can be produced and done without depending on the Holy Spirit issues forth from the flesh. Anything that one can decide according to one's own will and for which one does not need to seek God's will is of the flesh. Whenever one's heart does not have a sense of utter helplessness and a need for complete dependence on the Lord, one's doings are the works of the flesh. However, this does not mean that all these things are wicked or improper. No matter how good they are or how godly they are—even reading the Bible, praying, worshipping, and preaching—if they are not done in complete dependence on the Holy Spirit, then they issue forth from the flesh. As long as the flesh is allowed to live and is given the opportunity to be active, it is willing to do anything, even submit to God! In all the works of the flesh, however good they may be, "I" is always a big factor, the only difference being that sometimes it is hidden and other times it is manifested. The flesh never acknowledges its own weakness and uselessness. Even should it become a laughingstock, the flesh will still not believe in its

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inability.

"Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" This word reveals a great truth—what is proper and of the Spirit in the beginning may not necessarily continue to be so. Moreover, the experience of the believers shows us that what is of the Spirit in the beginning can easily become something of the flesh. Oftentimes when one receives a truth, one receives it of the Holy Spirit, but after a while this truth becomes the boasting of his flesh. Such was the case of the Jews in those days. So often in the matters of submitting to the Lord, of denying oneself afresh, of receiving power to save people, one may really depend on the Holy Spirit in the beginning, but after a while, he begins to consider God's grace as his own glory and reckon what is of God as his own. It is also like this in the matter of one's conduct. In the beginning, it is really the work of the Holy Spirit so that one experiences a great change—loving what he previously hated and hating what he previously loved. Yet not long after, "self" creeps in. He either considers the changed conduct as his own achievement and commends himself, or he loses the heart of dependence on the Holy Spirit and becomes careless, relying on himself as he continues to go on. In the experience of believers, there are hundreds and thousands of cases which at the outset had the Holy Spirit as the center and then after a while had the flesh as the center.

What is the reason that so many dear children of God fail while they try their best to seek a perfect, consecrated life and desire to obtain a more abundant life? Often while the believer is listening to a message, talking to others, reading spiritual books, or praying, God Himself may appear to show him that it is perfectly possible to have a satisfying life in the Lord. The believer also feels that this life is very simple and very sweet and that henceforth nothing will hinder him from obtaining this life. Then the experience really comes! At this time he receives the blessings, power, and glory which he had never before received. How wonderful this is! However, it passes away quickly. What a pity! Why? Is his faith imperfect? Is his consecration not single-hearted? His faith and consecration are truly and definitely for the Lord. Why then does it become this way? The reason for the loss and the way to be restored seem perplexing. Actually, there is no other reason than that he trusts in his flesh. He thinks he can perfect by the flesh what was begun by the Spirit. He substitutes self for the Holy Spirit. The self takes the lead and hopes that the Holy Spirit will come along to help. The work and the position of the Holy Spirit have been usurped by the flesh. He does not depend completely on the leading of the Holy Spirit to accomplish all the work, nor does he wait on the Lord. This means that he wants to follow the Lord Jesus without denying himself. This is the root of all the failures.

### **THE SINS WHICH COME IMMEDIATELY AFTER**

If the believer is so self-confident as to perfect the work of the Holy Spirit with the strength of his flesh, he not only will not be able to attain a perfect spiritual living but also will always be drifting about. Soon afterward, he will also see that the sins which he had overcome previously are coming back. Perhaps when we read such a word for the first time we are surprised. However, it is true that wherever the flesh is serving God, the power of sin is strengthened therein. Why were the Pharisees so puffed up yet still the slaves of sin? Was it not because they had so many righteous deeds and served God so zealously? Why did the apostle reprove the Galatians? Why did they have the deeds of the flesh? Was it not because they wanted the righteousness by works? Was it not because they wanted to perfect by the flesh the good work which the Holy Spirit had begun? The danger for a young believer is

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that when he understands the salvation of the cross from the flesh and sins, he stops short of putting to death his self and his strength for doing good. Eventually, he falls again into the sins of the flesh. The greatest error of a believer is that after having overcome sins by the Lord, he does not continue in the same way to sustain this. Instead, unconsciously he tries to sustain it with his own works and determination. Perhaps this is effective for a little while, but soon he finds himself falling into the former sins again. His present sins may vary somewhat from his former sins, but just the same they all are sins. At this time, he is either discouraged, knowing that he is not able to have a long-lasting experience of victory over sins, or he becomes a hypocrite, trying to hide his sins and not honestly confessing that he has sinned. What is the reason for such failure? If the flesh can be your power to do good, so it can also be your power to sin. Whatever is of the self, whether good or evil, is merely the expression of the flesh. If it does not have the opportunity to sin, it is willing to do good. But since it has the opportunity to do good, soon it will sin.

It is here that Satan deceives the children of God. If the believers would maintain the attitude of the "flesh" being crucified, Satan would have no way because "the flesh is the workshop of Satan." If the "flesh"—not only a part of the flesh—is really under the power of the Lord's death, then Satan will be unemployed. Therefore, Satan is willing to allow the believers to put to death the sinful part of the flesh, but he deludes the believers into retaining the good part, realizing that if the good part of the flesh remains, the life of the flesh will be kept. Then he still has the workshop to do his work, so that eventually he will regain that which he lost. He knows that if the flesh can overcome the Holy Spirit in the matter of serving God, the flesh can also obtain and maintain the victory in the matter of serving sin. This is the reason why many believers fall back to serving sin after they have been freed from sin. If the Holy Spirit is not actually in complete and uninterrupted control and directing them in the matter of worship, He will not have the power to direct and control them in their daily life. If I have not denied myself toward God, neither will I be able to deny myself toward man; I will not be able to overcome hatred, temper, and selfishness. These two matters are linked together and cannot be separated.

Since the believers in Galatia did not know this, they fell into the state of biting and devouring one another (Gal. 5:15). They not only wanted to perfect by the flesh what they had begun in the Spirit, but they also desired to "make a good show in the flesh" (6:12), to boast in the flesh (v. 13). Naturally their successes in the aspect of doing good by the flesh were many, but their failures in the aspect of the flesh doing evil were also many. They did not realize that as long as the flesh can serve God with its own ability and its own ideas, it can serve sin as well. If the believer cannot forbid the flesh to do good, neither can he forbid the flesh to do evil. The best way to not sin is to not do good by the self. Since they do not realize the degree of the corruption of the flesh, in their foolishness they want to utilize the flesh, not knowing that whether the flesh follows the lusts or boasts in doing good, it is similarly corrupt. On the one hand, they want to perfect by the flesh that which the Holy Spirit has begun, but on the other hand, they want to eradicate the passions and the lusts of the flesh. Consequently, they cannot do what God wants them to do.

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**CHAPTER FIVE**

**THE ULTIMATE ATTITUDE  
OF THE BELIEVER TOWARDS THE FLESH**

**GOD'S VIEW OF THE FLESH**

At this time, it would be good for the believers to refresh their memory concerning God's verdict on the flesh. The Lord Jesus said, "The flesh profits nothing" (John 6:63). Both the sins of the flesh and the righteousnesses of the flesh are of no profit! All that is born of the flesh, regardless what it may be, is flesh and can never become "non-flesh." Whether it be the flesh in preaching, the flesh in listening, the flesh in praying, the flesh in offering, the flesh in reading the Scripture, the flesh in singing the hymns, or the flesh in doing good, God has told us that all these have no profit! No matter how much the believers trust the flesh, God has said it is of no profit and does not help the spiritual life. The flesh cannot fulfill the righteousness of God.

"For the mind set on the flesh is death" (Rom. 8:6). From God's point of view, there is spiritual death in the flesh. There is no other way except to commit the flesh to the cross. No matter how capable the flesh is of doing good, of thinking and planning, and of gaining the commendation of man, in God's eyes, all that originates from the flesh has the inscription in capital letters, "DEATH."

"Because the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). The flesh is completely against God and has no possibility of being mingled with God. This is not only so with the evils which originate from the flesh, but even the most noble thoughts and conduct from the flesh are enmity against God. Even doing righteous deeds, not to mention committing sins, is doing them independently, apart from God.

"For it is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be" (Rom. 8:7). The better one does, the farther away he is from God. In the world, how many good men are willing to believe in the Lord Jesus? Actually, self-righteousness is not righteousness; it is unrighteousness. No matter what, man himself can never do what is taught in the Bible. Whether good or evil, he is never subject to God's restriction. If he is evil, he offends the law. If he is good, he sets up another righteousness apart from the Lord Jesus and loses the original purpose of the law. "For through the law is the clear knowledge of sin" (3:20).

"And those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). This is the final resolution. No matter how good man's conduct may be, if it originates from the self, it can never please God. God can only be pleased by His Son. Aside from Him and His work, neither man nor man's work can please God. What is done by his own flesh may seem to be good. However, because it is done by his own strength and originates from his self, God is not pleased. Man can think up many ways to do good deeds, to improve, and to advance, but since these actions originate from the flesh, God is not pleased. This not only applies to the unregenerated man, but also to the regenerated believer. If he has accomplished something on his own, no matter how good and how effective the work is, God can never be pleased. What is God's pleasure or displeasure is not a matter of good or evil but a matter of the source. The conduct may be quite good, but where does it come from?

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Having read these few verses, we can really see how vain man's conduct according to flesh is. Believers should see God's evaluation of the flesh precisely; then they will not err. Although we human beings make a distinction between good and evil concerning behavior, the distinction God makes is not limited to behavior but also touches the source. Before God, a very defiled, evil deed is the same as the most excellent work of the flesh. Both are of the flesh and cannot please God. To the same degree that God hates unrighteousness, He also hates self-righteousness. Before God, all the natural good deeds that a man can do—not through regeneration, union with Christ, and dependence on the Holy Spirit—are no less of the flesh than adultery, corruption, and licentiousness. No matter how excellent man's good deeds may be, unless they originate from complete dependence on His Holy Spirit, they are of the flesh and are rejected by God. Regardless of the outward appearance of the flesh and regardless whether the flesh is of the sinners or of His believers, God opposes, rejects, and hates everything that is of the flesh. His decision is that the flesh must die.

## THE EXPERIENCE OF THE BELIEVERS

But how can the believers see what God sees? God hates the flesh and the conduct of the flesh so much, yet, except for the evil acts of the flesh, the believers still are lenient with the flesh and cannot be as absolute as God is. Moreover, the believers still do many things in the flesh with self-trust, self-reliance, and self-confidence, considering that they have received God's grace to the full and are able to utilize the flesh to have righteous acts. Because of this, the Holy Spirit of God must lead the believers through the most shameful pathway that they may know the flesh and thus have God's view. Therefore, God allows the believers to fail, become weak, and sometimes even to commit sin, so that they will know whether or not there is any good in the flesh. Frequently, when the believers think that they are progressing spiritually, the Lord tries them in order that they may know themselves. Often the Lord reveals His holiness to them to cause them to judge the corruption of the flesh. Sometimes the Lord allows Satan to attack them so that they may see their self in suffering. However, this lesson is the most difficult one to learn, and even while learning, success cannot be attained overnight. Actually, it is after having gone through many years that the believers gradually realize the unreliability of their own flesh. At best, it still has some mixture of corruption; perhaps God often permits the believers to experience Romans 7 so that they will finally be willing to say as Paul said, "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells" (v. 18). How difficult it is to learn to say this word! Unless the believers have gone through many painful failures, they are always self-dependent and always think that they are capable. It is after one has failed a hundred or a thousand times that he realizes that all self-righteousness is totally unreliable—in the flesh nothing good dwells.

However, this is not the end. Such self-judgment must be continuous. Whenever the believers do not judge themselves and do not consider the flesh so useless and so disgusting, but rather are slightly self-confident and self-glorifying, God has no choice but to let them pass through the fire again to burn up all the dregs. How few are those who humble themselves and acknowledge themselves as unclean! If they do not, God will not stop His working. Because the believers cannot be rid of the influence of the flesh for a moment, self-judgment cannot cease for a moment. Otherwise, they will fall back again to the self-boasting of the flesh.

Many people think that the Holy Spirit's convicting men of sin pertains only to the people of the world—He convicts sinners of their sins that they might believe in the Lord Jesus. We ought to know that this kind of work of the Holy Spirit is as essential in the saints as it is in the sinners. He must convict

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the saints of their sins not only once or twice, but daily without stopping. Oh, may we have more of the conviction of the Holy Spirit so that we may forever place the flesh under judgment and may not let it take control. May we not forget, even for a moment, the true facts of our flesh and God's evaluation of it! May we never again trust ourselves (that is, the flesh), thinking that it can do anything to please God! May we forever depend upon the Holy Spirit and not give the slightest place to self.

If ever there was one in the world who could boast according to his flesh, that was Paul because, as to the righteousness of the law, he was blameless. Even today, if anyone could boast according to his flesh, that must be Paul also because he was an apostle who had seen the Lord with his own eyes and was greatly used by the Lord. However, he did not do this because he knew the flesh. In his experience of Romans 7, he already knew what his self was like. God had opened his eyes in the experience of life, and he knew that in his flesh was nothing but sin. Whereas he had boasted in the past of the righteousness of the self, he now realized that it was nothing but dung and nothing but sin. He had learned this lesson, and having learned, henceforth he did not dare to trust the flesh. In fact, he did not forget what he had learned, and he still continued to learn. Therefore he could say, "Have no confidence in the flesh, though I myself have something to be confident of in the flesh as well. If any other man thinks that he has confidence in the flesh, I more" (Phil. 3:3-4). Although there were many reasons for him to trust his flesh, he not only knew God's view towards the flesh but also knew how undependable and untrustworthy his flesh was. If we read the following verses, we will see how humble he was: "Not having my own righteousness" (v. 9); "If perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead" (v. 11); "Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus" (v. 12). If the believers want to attain to the state of being completely spiritual, they must have the thought of not having obtained and not have the slightest self-confidence, self-satisfaction, and self-pleasing, which are the proofs of trusting the flesh.

If God's children sincerely seek after the more abundant life and are willing to accept God's evaluation of the flesh, they will not consider themselves stronger than others no matter how advanced they are. Neither will they say such words as, "I have always been different from others," but they will be willing to let the Holy Spirit reveal to them God's holiness and the corruption of their flesh and will not be afraid to see these clearly. Then the Holy Spirit will be able to cause them to realize the corruption of the self at the proper time. Perhaps in this way their failure may be lessened some. How pitiful it is that, although the intention of the believers may not completely be to trust the flesh, they may be impure and still regard their self as having some strength. Therefore, God cannot avoid allowing them to go through failure in order to remove that little bit of self-dependence.

## **THE CROSS AND THE DEEPER WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Because the flesh is very subtle, the believers must moment by moment have the deeper work of the Holy Spirit through the cross. Once the believers see the standing of their own flesh before God, the cross and the deeper work of the Holy Spirit are indispensable. By the cross the believers are delivered from the sin of the flesh. By the cross the believers are also delivered from the righteousness of the flesh. By walking according to the Spirit, the believers will not follow the flesh to commit sin. By walking according to the Spirit, the believers will also not follow the flesh to do righteous deeds.

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In fact, the work of the cross has been accomplished absolutely, perfectly, and infinitely; it cannot be deepened. However, the process of a Christian's experience of this fact can be deepening step by step. Little by little, the Holy Spirit teaches the believers more of the principles of the cross. If one is faithful in submission, gradually he will experience more deeply what the cross has already accomplished. This means that the cross, from the objective side, is absolute, and nothing can be added to it. However, from the subjective side, it is progressive and can advance deeper and deeper.

Now the believers should see more clearly their having died with the Lord Jesus on the cross because the Holy Spirit can only work through the cross. Besides the cross, the Holy Spirit has no other instruments. The believers should have a fresh understanding of the teaching in Galatians 5:24. Not only the "passions" and "lusts" of the flesh have been "crucified," but "the flesh" (including all its righteousness and ability to do righteous acts) has also been "crucified." The cross is the place not only for crucifying the passions and lusts but also for crucifying the flesh, which brings forth the passions and lusts, no matter how it is respected and loved by man! When the believers see this and willingly reject all that is of the flesh (whether good or evil), they are able to walk according to the Holy Spirit and please God and attain to a completely spiritual life. This "willingness" is indispensable. What the cross has accomplished in fact is complete, but how much man has realized in experience is determined by his knowledge, willingness, and faith.

If the believers do not reject all goodness in the flesh, they will see that in many things, although the flesh seems to be very powerful and very capable in working, when the real calling of God comes, calling them to prepare to go to Golgotha to suffer, they will be as weak as water, shrink back, and not be able to go forward. No matter how good or how strong the flesh is, it can never satisfy the requirements of God. Why did the disciples fail in the garden of Gethsemane? Because "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). It is the weakness here which causes greater failure later. The flesh with its power and work may be excellent, but it can only manifest its capability in matters suitable to its own taste. As to the actual requirements of God, the flesh inevitably backs away. Therefore death is unavoidable; otherwise, God's will cannot be done.

Our flesh is whatever comes from within us—our desire, our opinion, all that aims at developing ourselves so that we may be seen and respected by others—all is of our flesh. In this flesh, there is natural evil and natural goodness. John 1:13 mentions the "will" of the flesh which can will, decide, and plan to do good to please God. Nevertheless, this originates from man's flesh and needs to go to the cross.

Colossians 2:18 speaks about the "mind" of the flesh. All the self-confidence that Christians have is actually their trust that they have wisdom and that they know how to serve God and understand the teaching of the Scriptures. Second Corinthians 1:12 speaks of fleshly "wisdom." It is very dangerous for a man to receive the truth of the Bible with his wisdom because this is the most hidden and subtle method which causes the believers to perfect the work of the Holy Spirit by their flesh. A very precious truth may be stored only in the memory, which is merely in the mind of the flesh. Only the Spirit gives life; the flesh profits nothing. All truths, if not continually enlivened by the Lord, profit neither ourselves nor others. We are not speaking about sins here; rather, we are speaking concerning the things that come out of man's natural life, even though it is a life in union with Christ. This kind of doing is natural and not of the spirit. We should not only reject our righteousness, but also deny the wisdom of our mind. This must be put on the cross.

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Colossians 2:23 speaks about a "worship" in the flesh. Such worship is according to our opinion concerning the things of God's Spirit. All the methods we use to stir up, seek, and acquire the sense of worship are all worship in the flesh. If we are not willing to worship according to the teaching of the Bible nor to be led by the Holy Spirit in Christian work, biblical knowledge, and saving souls, it is always possible to walk "according to the flesh."

The Bible often speaks about the "life" of the flesh. If this life of the flesh has not undergone the work of the cross, it lives in the believers just as it lives in the sinners. The only difference is that in the believers there is opposition from the life of the Spirit. The life of the flesh can become the vitality of the believers; they can draw strength from it to live on the earth. It can help the believers to have strength in serving God, in meditating on the truth, and in consecrating themselves for the work. It can become the motivation for doing many good works. In fact, it can cause the believers, on the one hand, to have it as their life and, on the other hand, to think that they are keeping the word of God's will as their goal.

We must truly know that in man's life there are two different principles of living. Many believers have a mixed life, sometimes obeying this and sometimes obeying the other. Sometimes they completely depend on the power of the Spirit, while at other times they also have a heart of self-reliance. There is no steadfastness. "The things which I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there should be Yes, yes and No, no?" (2 Cor. 1:17). The characteristic of the flesh is its fickleness—Yes, yes and No, no. The will of God is to not walk according to the flesh even for a moment but to walk according to the spirit (Rom. 8:4). We should accept the will of God.

"In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11). We should be willing to allow the power of the cross, as a knife of circumcision, to completely cut off from us everything which is of the flesh. This kind of "cutting" should be deep and should make a clear separation so that nothing of the flesh can be hidden or remain. The cross and the curse cannot be separated (Gal. 3:13). If we commit our flesh to the cross, we commit it to the curse, acknowledging that there is no good thing in the flesh and that it has no other destiny except to be cursed by God. If we do not have such a heart, it will be difficult for us to take the circumcision of the flesh. The love, desire, thoughts, knowledge, mind, worship, and work of the flesh must go to the cross.

To be crucified with the Lord means to accept the curse the Lord endured. Christ being nailed to die on the cross was not a glorious thing (Heb. 12:2). His being hung on the tree means that He was cursed there (Deut. 21:23). Therefore, the flesh being crucified with the Lord means that it is cursed with the Lord. We not only accept the accomplishment of the cross, but we also need to have the fellowship of the cross. The believers should acknowledge that their flesh is qualified for nothing but to suffer the death of the curse. Once the believers see the value of the flesh as God sees it, they can have the experiential fellowship of the cross. Before the Holy Spirit can gain complete control in the believers, the flesh must be committed completely to the cross. We pray that God may show us the true picture of the flesh and the necessity of its being crucified.

Brothers, how lacking in humility we are, and how unwilling we are to accept the cross of the Lord! We do not want to admit that we are helpless, useless, and corrupt and that we deserve nothing but death. Brothers, what we lack now is not a perfect living but a perfect death. We need to die perfectly and completely. We have already said too much about life, power, holiness, and righteousness. Let us

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now pay attention to death! May we let the Holy Spirit pierce deeply into our flesh with the cross of Christ so that the cross may become a real experience in our life! If we die properly, we will live properly. If we are in union with Him in the likeness of death, we will also be in union with Him in the likeness of living. May we call upon the Lord to open our eyes that we may know how essential death is. Should He do such a work? Are you ready for such a work by Him? Are you willing to let the Lord point out your weakness? Are you willing to be crucified openly outside the gate before the public? Will you let the Spirit of the cross work in you? Oh, may we have more of the Lord's death! May we die thoroughly!

We should see clearly that the death of the cross should be continuous. We cannot enter into the stage of resurrection and forsake the stage of death. The degree of the experience of the resurrection life is according to the degree of the experience of death. Lately there has been a danger among those believers who pursue an ascended life and forget that the death of the flesh cannot be interrupted. They forsake the position of death and go on. The result is that they either take the works of the flesh lightly or consider that which is of the flesh to be of the spirit and thus spiritualize the flesh! Oh, death is the foundation for everything! Man may proceed, but he should not destroy the foundation. If the death of the flesh is not genuinely maintained, the resurrected and ascended life is merely a falsehood. We should never consider that we are already spiritual and advanced and that the flesh has no power to seduce us any more. The enemy wants us to leave the realm of the cross in order that we may become those who are outwardly spiritual but inwardly fleshly. Many statements such as, "I thank the Lord because we are now such and such, and not such and such," are nothing but echoes of the prayer in Luke 18:11-12. It is while such ones are thinking that they are delivered from the flesh that they are being deceived by the flesh. We should always abide in the death of the Lord.

Our security is in the Holy Spirit. The safe way is to be completely willing to be taught, to be extremely fearful to follow the flesh even slightly, and to be happy to yield to Christ, trusting that the Holy Spirit will control our lives with the power of God that the life of Christ's death will live out from us. As much as the flesh filled us formerly, so we also must let the Spirit fill us. We must let the Holy Spirit rule and completely overthrow the power of the flesh so that He Himself can become our new life and manifest Christ as our life. Then we can say, "And it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." However, this life is still based on "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20).

If we live with a heart of faith and submission, then we can expect the Holy Spirit to do a most divine and marvelous work in us. "If we live by the Spirit"—this is the faith which we must have to believe that the Spirit dwells in us—"let us also walk by the Spirit" (5:25)—this is the submission which we must have. We should simply and restfully believe that the Lord has given us His Spirit and that He is living in us. We should believe in His gift and believe that the Holy Spirit is living in us. Take this as the secret of Christ's life in us—the Holy Spirit dwells in the deepest part of our being, our spirit. Meditate on this, believe in this, and remember this until, before God, due to the glory and the reality of this truth, a holy fear and wonder emerge within us that the Holy Spirit dwells in us! We should follow His leading. This leading is not in our mind or thoughts but in our life and will. We should surrender to God and let the Holy Spirit regulate all our conduct. He will manifest the Lord Jesus in our life. This is His work.

### **EXHORTATION**

If we let the Spirit do a deeper work by the cross, then the circumcision which we have received will

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become more real day by day. "For we are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). The trust in the flesh has been lost due to the receiving of the circumcision not done by man's hand. Here the apostle makes the boasting in Christ Jesus the center of everything. He clearly points out to us the danger on the one hand and the security on the other hand. To have confidence in the flesh is very damaging to the boasting in Christ Jesus, but to worship in Spirit affords us the blessed joy of life and truth. The Holy Spirit exalts the Lord Jesus, but He abases the flesh. If we truly want to boast in Christ and let Him boast in us, and want always to truly glory in Christ Jesus alone in our experience, then, on the one hand, we must have the circumcision of the cross, and on the other hand, we must learn to worship in Spirit. It is not to strive, because striving is the work of the flesh. There is no need of using methods because only when they have the help of the flesh can they be useful. It is to absolutely distrust the flesh, however good or capable it may be. Only trust the Holy Spirit and obey Him alone. With this kind of trust and obedience, the flesh will be abased and kept in its position of curse and will lose its power. May the Lord grant us grace that we may increasingly despise ourselves, regard ourselves as undependable, and realize how useless we are—absolutely not trusting our own flesh. This is the real death. Without death, this is not possible.

"Only do not turn this freedom into an opportunity for the flesh" (Gal. 5:13). Death is the flesh's position. We have already obtained freedom in the Lord, but let us not give any opportunity to the flesh. We must not again unconsciously regard the work of the Spirit as our own. We should always be watchful and not allow the flesh to be rekindled from the ashes. We must not give the glory of the victory to ourselves. Otherwise, the flesh will have the opportunity to work again. After you have gained a victory, do not consider that you are now safe, lest you give opportunity to the flesh and your fall become imminent. Since the flesh has long lost its power, do not consider that you have now learned everything and that you now have the strength to fight with the flesh and will always be able to win. If you entertain this kind of self-strength and lose your heart of utter dependence, the flesh has already gained the opportunity and will bring you again into a distressing experience. The attitude of helplessness should be guarded with holy diligence. This is the place where the flesh will attack. Just having a little intention of utilizing the self is an occasion for the flesh to gain an opportunity. Do not be afraid to lose face before man. Right after the teaching of the crucifixion of the flesh and of walking in the Spirit, the apostle says, "Let us not become vainglorious" (v. 26). If we know how useless we are before God, we must not boast before man either. If we cover the weakness of the flesh before man because we want to receive glory, we will give the flesh an opportunity to work. The Holy Spirit can help us and strengthen us, but He cannot replace us. We ourselves must steadfastly maintain an attitude of not giving any occasion to the flesh.

"Make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts" (Rom. 13:14). The work of the flesh always has its forerunner. Therefore, we must never leave any ground for it. We should always be watchful to see whether the flesh is placed in the position of being cursed and should also examine whether any provision has been made for it in our thoughts. A little thought of our own goodness can give the flesh the opportunity to work. The thought is very essential here. The reason is that, although one may only make provision for the flesh in his thoughts, the secret thought will come forth openly in words and deeds. The flesh must not have any ground. In conversing with people, we must also be careful lest, when words are many, the flesh will do its work. Although there is much that you love to talk about, if you are not depending on the Spirit in speaking, you should not say anything. Otherwise, you will make provision for the flesh to work. It is more so in our deeds. The flesh has many plans, expectations, and

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methods. The flesh has its own opinion, strength, and capability. All these may be excellent before man as well as in your own eyes. However, never be lenient; never retain even the best and consequently transgress the commandment of the Lord. We should put to death what we think to be the best without any consideration, not for any other reason than because it is of ourselves (the flesh). The righteousness as well as the sins of the flesh should be equally hated. A good deed done by the flesh should be repented of just as much as a great sin committed by the flesh. We must always maintain God's view towards the flesh.

If, unfortunately, one fails, he must examine himself, confess his sin, and ask for the cleansing of the precious blood. "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh" (2 Cor. 7:1). Never be lenient, concerned, or reluctant to cut off what you love lest you fall more deeply into the flesh. The teaching of the apostles is that we "cleanse ourselves." It is not the work of the Holy Spirit alone nor that of the precious blood alone, but you yourselves also must do the work of cleansing. You search out all the filthinesses of the flesh and commit them to the cross of the Lord. Although what you have done may not be sinful according to man's view, if it is done by yourself, even the best is also filthy in the eyes of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Whether people or things, it is all the same. God does not care for whatever shell or covering it has. It is the source that God takes heed to. Therefore, one should not only cleanse himself from his sinfulness but also cleanse himself from all the deeds of the flesh. "Beloved, I entreat you as strangers and sojourners to abstain from fleshly lusts" (1 Pet. 2:11).

## **SECTION THREE**

### **THE SOUL**

#### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### **THE WAY TO BE DELIVERED FROM SIN AND THE LIFE OF THE SOUL**

#### **THE WAY TO BE DELIVERED FROM SIN**

Romans 6 is the basis for the believers to be freed from sin. God has prepared this kind of freedom for every believer; therefore, every one can receive it. We must emphasize that the freedom from the power of sin can be experienced at the very moment when a sinner receives the Lord Jesus as his Savior and is regenerated. He does not have to wait until he has been a believer for a period of time and has failed many times before he can receive this good news. Because many believers only have heard an incomplete gospel or are not willing to receive the gospel completely or obey it absolutely, they must wait a long time before they can receive the gospel of Romans 6. Actually, this is a common

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blessing to be shared by every newborn believer.

For the sake of many, let us review what we have received through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

Romans 6 begins by asking us to recall, not to hope. We are asked to pay attention to what we have received in the past. Verse 6 tells us, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves." This verse shows us three persons: (1) "sin" (singular in the Greek), (2) the "old man," and (3) the "body."

There are great distinctions among these three. They each have a different share in the matter of committing sins. "Sin" here is commonly known as the root of sin. The Bible tells us that formerly we were the slaves of "sin," that is to say, "sin" was the master. Therefore, concerning the committing of sins, we know that "sin" first has its power, and then it enslaves us. This "sin" continuously exerts its power in order to hold us that we might obey our "old man" to commit sins. The old man is all that we received from Adam. If we want to know what the "old man" is, we only need to know what the new man is. Everything that is not of the new man belongs to the "old man." Our new man is all the things we received anew at the time of our regeneration. Therefore, the "old man" includes everything in our personality that does not belong to the new. It is our "person," our old personality, and everything that is old. Because of this "old man," we commit sins. He loves "sins" and is subject to the power of "sin."

The "body of sin" is our body which is necessary to be used as a puppet at the time of sinning. It is the physical part of man. The fact that it is called the "body of sin" means that it is in subjection to the power of "sin"; it is filled with the lusts of "sin," and "sin" is expressed through it. Otherwise, "sin" is merely an unseen power.

"Sin" is the power that drags us to commit sins. The "old man" is the mental part we received from Adam. The "body of sin" is the physical part we received from Adam.

Therefore, the experience of sinning is like this: sin is first, the old man is second, and the body is third. Sin exerts its power to attract, to compel, and to force man to commit sins. The old man loves sin, agrees with sin, inclines toward sin, and thus directs the body to commit sins. The body is the external puppet that actually carries out the sinning. Therefore, every time a person sins, it is the result of the collaboration of these three. There must be the oppression from the power of sin, the inclination of the old man, and the carrying out of the body.

Therefore, if anyone wants to be delivered from sin, what should he do? By their reasoning according to the above-mentioned experience, some have told us that if anyone wants to overcome sin, he must nullify sin at the root, since the cause of evil comes out of this sin. Therefore, there is the invention of the doctrine of the eradication of sin. They think that if the root of sin can be uprooted, man will no longer sin and will become holy. Others have told us that if anyone wants to overcome sin, it is sufficient to subdue the body, because the part in man that carries out the sinning is his body. As a result, there was a group of ascetics in the church who used all kinds of means to suppress themselves. They thought that if only they could overcome the desires of their body, they would be holy. Actually this is not God's way. Romans 6:6 shows us clearly the way of God. God does not intend to uproot the sin within, nor to suppress the body without. God deals with the old man in the middle.

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## GOD'S FACT

When the Lord Jesus went to the cross, He not only brought our sin there, but also brought us, our beings, there. Our old man has been crucified on the cross. This is an accomplished fact. Therefore the apostle tells us, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him." In the Greek "crucified" is a verb and is in the perfect tense. It means that our old man has been crucified with Him once and forever. As the crucifixion of Christ is an accomplished fact, similarly the crucifixion of our old man (with Him) is also an accomplished fact. No one doubts that Christ has been crucified. Why then do we doubt whether or not our old man has been crucified?

Many believers have heard the truth of co-crucifixion, but because of either their lack of revelation from God or their shortage of faith, they think that they themselves should die and must do their best to crucify themselves. They do this themselves, and they also teach others to do the same. However, the end result is that they do not have the strength to be delivered from sin. Regardless of what they do, they feel the old man is not dead.

This is a great mistake. The Bible never tells us to crucify ourselves. On the contrary, what the Bible shows us is not that it is up to us to crucify ourselves but that when Christ went to the cross, He also brought us there to be crucified with Him. What the Bible shows us is not that from this moment onward we should begin to crucify our old man but rather that our old man has been crucified already with the Lord Jesus when He was on the cross. There is no need to look for other verses in the Scripture. It is sufficient to look at Romans 6:6: "Our old man has been crucified with Him." There is not the slightest sense that we should crucify ourselves, nor is there any indication that the accomplishment of this crucifixion is in the future. Here we are shown without any ambiguity that we are crucified with Christ, and this co-crucifixion is an accomplished fact.

Here is the result of this very precious saying in the Bible, "in Christ." Because we are in Christ and are in union with Him, when Christ went to the cross, we went there in Him; when Christ was crucified on the cross, we were also crucified in Him. Oh, the most marvelous thing is that we are in Christ!

Any truth that we understand only mentally will never enable us to withstand temptations. The revelation of the Holy Spirit of God is absolutely indispensable. The Spirit of God must give us a revelation so that we may know that we are in Christ and that we are in union with Him. This revelation will cause us to see very clearly that our old man has been crucified with Him because we are in Christ. This is not a mental understanding but a revelation of the Holy Spirit. Once a person has God's revelation, this truth spontaneously becomes powerful in him, and he also has the power to believe. Faith comes from revelation. Without revelation there is no faith. Many people do not have the living faith but only have the mental understanding because they do not have God's revelation. Therefore, brothers, let us pray to God until He gives us a revelation so that we can truly say that we know "that our old man has been crucified with Him."

What is the use of the crucifixion of our old man? "That the body of sin might be annulled." The Chinese Version, which renders this, "That the sinful body might be destroyed," is not accurate. "Sinful body" should be translated as "the body of sin." "Destroyed" should be "paralyzed" or "unemployed."

Formerly, when "sin" instigated, our "old man" responded to it, and consequently the "body" carried out the committing of sins. Now, even though sin is still instigating as usual and is still oppressing with

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its power, because the "old man" has been crucified and the new man is now taking his place, "sin" can no longer tempt this man. Because he is a new man, there is no longer an "old man" to agree with "sin" and to direct the "body" to sin. Since the "old man" has been crucified, this "body" of sin becomes unemployed and has nothing to do. Originally, the occupation of the "body" was to sin. Now it can no longer sin. Therefore, it is unemployed. Praise the Lord, this is what the Lord has prepared for us.

Why did God cause our old man to be crucified with Christ and make our body unemployed? His purpose was that we would not be the "slaves" of sin. Because God has done this, we henceforth do not have to obey sin, we no longer have to be under the oppression of sin, and we no more have to be bound by the power of sin. Sin cannot be our master anymore. Hallelujah! We should truly praise God for this.

### THE TWO CONDITIONS

How then can we enter into this blessing? There are two very important matters. The first is mentioned in verse 11: "So also you, reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but living to God in Christ Jesus." This is faith. God says that our old man has been crucified with Christ, and we believe His Word. Thus we reckon ourselves to be dead. How do we die? "Reckon yourselves to be dead to sin." God says that we have been resurrected with Christ, and we believe His Word and reckon ourselves to be living. How do we live? "Reckon yourselves to be...living to God."

This kind of reckoning is nothing other than believing God according to His Word. God says that the old man has been crucified, so we reckon that the old man has already died. God says that we are living, so we reckon ourselves to be living. The failure of many is that they want to feel, to see, and to experience, but they do not believe the Word of God. They want to wait until they themselves have felt something, seen something, and experienced something; then they will believe that what God has said concerning their old man being crucified is real. They do not know that what God has done is already done in Christ. As long as we believe His Word and reckon that what He has done is real, His Holy Spirit will give us the experience. His Spirit will cause what is in Christ to flow into us.

Another matter is mentioned in verse 13: "Neither present your members as weapons of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as alive from the dead, and your members as weapons of righteousness to God." This is consecration. This is also a very important part. If we have something we are not willing to part with, anything which God wants us to give up, yet we are not willing, sin will still have power over us; our "reckoning" will be of no effect. If God wants us to do something, to go somewhere for Him, and to speak something for Him, yet we are not willing to yield our members as weapons of righteousness to God, we will be perplexed and wonder why we cannot be freed from sin. As long as we are not willing to give up something and if we have any resistance, it is still possible that sin might return to rule. Naturally, under such a condition, we will not have the power to reckon, to believe the Word of God. If we do not reckon and our faith stops, although we are in Christ positionally, our living is not in Christ—we do not have the abiding in the Lord mentioned in John 15—we will not have the fact which is only possible in Christ, that is, the fact that we have been crucified already.

This reckoning and this consecration must both be specific. They must be as specific as our receiving of the Lord Jesus as our Savior. If there is merely a mental understanding without the specific believing and the specific consecration, then it is not possible to have this kind of living.

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Whenever we are defeated, we can definitely say that it is because we have failed either in our faith or in our obedience. Besides these, there is no other reason. If there is failure, the problem is either in one of these or in both. We should learn to live by faith in Christ, never looking at ourselves, thinking about ourselves, or employing ourselves outside of Christ. We must learn daily to believe that we are in Christ and that all the facts in Christ are real. At the same time, we must keep our own consecration by the power of God. We need to count all things as dung. There is nothing on the earth which we cannot give up for the Lord. There is nothing we want to reserve for ourselves. Whatever God asks of me, no matter how difficult it is, no matter how much it is contrary to the flesh, my heart is always willing. There is no price too great to pay if it is for God. I will not care for any sacrifice as long as I can please God. Daily I will learn to be an obedient child.

If we have such a reckoning and such a consecration, what will be the consequence? The Word of God is very clear. Verse 14 tells us, "For sin will not lord it over you."

## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SIN AND THE BODY**

Once a believer has the understanding of the truth of co-crucifixion and the experience of being freed from sin, he is in a very dangerous stage. If he can have proper guidance at this time and rely on the Holy Spirit to do the deeper work of the cross in him, then he can enter into the state of being completely in the spirit. However, if he becomes complacent, thinking that living a life of overcoming sin is the highest living and does not allow the cross to terminate his soul-life, he will remain in the realm of the soul and consider the experience of the soul as the experience of the spirit. Although his old man has been dealt with already, his soul-life has not been dealt with by the cross. The will, mind, and emotion of this life are active without any restraint, so that the experience of such a believer is still of the flesh.

We must know to what extent the effect of the freedom from sin in our whole being is. Then we will know what has been dealt with and what has not been dealt with.

We must especially know this one thing, that is, "sin" is particularly related to our body. Unlike many philosophers, we do not think the flesh is intrinsically evil, but we admit that the body is the sphere where "sin" rules. Therefore, we see in Romans 6:6 that the Holy Spirit calls our body "the body of sin," because before we experience the dealing of the cross, before we yield our members as weapons of righteousness to God, our body is simply "the body of sin." Before we reckon ourselves as dead to "sin" and yield our body to God, "sin" possesses our body, "sin" is the master of our body. Our body is the stronghold of "sin," the tool of "sin," and the defense post of "sin." Therefore, there is no other term more appropriate than this, "the body of sin."

If we carefully read the portion in the Bible that speaks about the freedom from sin in Romans 6 through 8, we will see what the relationship between the body and "sin" is. Furthermore, we will know that God's full salvation is to save our body to the extent that it is fully delivered from the work and service to "sin," and yields its members to God.

The apostle tells us in chapter six "that the body of sin might be annulled" (v. 6). "Do not let sin therefore reign in your mortal body so that you obey the body's lusts" (v. 12). "Neither present your members as weapons of unrighteousness to sin, but present...your members as weapons of righteousness to God" (v. 13).

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God again speaks through the apostle concerning the body in chapter seven. "The passions for sins...operated in our members" (v. 5). "But I see a different law in my members...making me a captive to the law of sin which is in my members" (v. 23). "Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (v. 24).

The voice of the Holy Spirit is even clearer in chapter eight. "The body is dead because of sin" (v. 10). "Will also give life to your mortal bodies" (v. 11). "If by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live" (v. 13). "The redemption of our body" (v. 23).

After reading these verses, we should know how much God pays attention to our body. This is because the body is particularly the sphere of the activities of "sin." The reason man is the slave of "sin" is that man's body is the puppet of "sin." Whenever the body becomes unemployed to "sin," man becomes the slave of "sin" no longer.

Therefore, we see that a man is freed from "sin" when his body is delivered from the power and might of "sin."

Because of this we see "our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled." The crucifixion of the old man is to cause the body to be delivered from the dominion of "sin." The old man, which is the co-worker of "sin," has been crucified. Now the new man occupies the position formerly occupied by the old man. Now the Spirit of God lives within. Although sin still exists, its power over the body has been broken. Because of the crucifixion of the old man, "sin" can no longer use the body. Without the old man as its co-worker, "sin" cannot use the body directly.

Therefore, we must remember that our deliverance from "sin" is only to have our body delivered. (Of course, we still have to wait until the future for the full redemption, to be freed from the presence of sin.) The natural life—the soul-life by which we live—has not been dealt with. If we consider the living of overcoming sin as the highest living, then we merely consider the "paralysis" of the body as the highest living and have forgotten that besides our body of sin, there is still a natural soul, the soul-life. This soul-life, just like the body, needs to be dealt with. If a believer only knows the "annulling" of the body (of course, this is already very marvelous), yet he does not know how to deny his soul-life, his spiritual experience is rather shallow and cannot be very deep.

We have mentioned previously how "self" (soul) is still very active in the work of God. Actually, although the body has become paralyzed, the whole life of the soul is still very active at this time. This life is sheltered in the self, yet this life has very different expressions outwardly. The soul-life is comprised of at least three main parts—the will, the mind, and the emotion. Therefore, when the believers live according to the soul-life, some incline toward the will, some incline toward the mind, and some incline toward the emotion. Or sometimes they incline toward one part and at other times toward another. Although the outward manifestations may differ significantly due to the differences between the will, the mind, and the emotion, they are the same in that they belong to the soul. For those who incline toward the will, the focus of their living is their own preference, and they are not willing to obey God's will. Those who incline toward the mind chart the course of their way by their own wisdom instead of following the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their intuition in a calm and undisturbed manner. Those who incline toward the emotion seek pleasures in their feelings, considering this to be the supreme living. However, if believers walk according to their soul-life, regardless of what their inclination is, one thing is common to all of them, that is, that they live by the power of the self. This

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power of the self is all the believer's natural power which he had before he believed in the Lord, whether talent, ability, eloquence, cleverness, charisma, enthusiasm, or whatever. With regard to the believers who walk according to the soul-life, we must know that first, in principle, the soul-life is the natural power of the self, and second, in manifestation, the soul-life has three different livings—stubbornly unsubmitive, self-conceited, or sensuously pleasure-seeking. If a believer lives by his soul-life, exhausting his own energy for everything, inevitably he will outwardly have these three different expressions. At this time, if he does not go on and put his soul-life to death, he will nurture his "self-life" which causes God to be displeased and causes him to lose the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

## THE SOUL AS LIFE

We have already seen that the soul is our inherent life. It is the power that makes it possible for us to live, to have our being, and to exist. (All these refer to the aspect of the flesh.) Our soul is our life. Both "creature" and "living creature" in Genesis 1:21 and 24 are "soul" in the original language. Therefore, this soul is the life which man has in common with other animals. This life is the inherent life of man. Before we were regenerated, we lived by this life on the earth, and it is this life which every man has. The word for soul in Greek, which is the original language, is psuche, meaning "animal life." Therefore, this soul-life is the kind of life that makes man a living creature. This soul-life belongs to the natural. This life is not necessarily sinful since many believers have already overcome sins through the old man being crucified with Christ. However, it remains natural. This life is the life of man; therefore, it is very "human." Consider how a "man" can be a "man." His life is totally the life of "man," which may be good, lovely, and humble. Nonetheless, it is merely "human."

This life is altogether different from the new life the Holy Spirit imparted to us at the time of our regeneration. What the Holy Spirit gives us is the uncreated life of God Himself, but this other is the life of man. What the Holy Spirit grants us is an extraordinary life, but this other is a natural life. What the Holy Spirit gives us is the eternal zoe, but this other is the psuche.

Life is manifested through action. Life is the power within man which causes the members of the whole body to move. The activity of man is the expression of this life. That invisible power behind human activity is the latent potential of this life. All we "are" naturally is included in this life. This life is our soul-life.

## SOUL AND SIN

All that the soul-life does is supply power to execute whatever is commanded. If the spirit reigns, according to the direction of the spirit the soul-life exercises its will to decide and to follow what the spirit commands. If sin reigns in the body, according to the temptation of sin the soul-life exercises its will to decide and to carry out what sin desires. The soul-life works according to its master. It is only responsible to execute all the commands. Before the fall of man, it provided all its energy for the spirit's direction, but after the fall, it entirely follows the coercion of sin. Ever since man became flesh, this sin which reigns in the body has become the nature of man, enslaving the soul which is the life of man. This causes man to entirely follow sin in his walk. Thus sin is the nature of man, and soul is the life of man.

When we talk about our life and nature, it seems as if we consider life and nature to be the same. But strictly speaking, there is a distinction between life and nature. Seemingly, life is broader than nature.

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Every kind of life has its own nature. Nature is the natural principle of life, which is the inclination and the desire of life. While we are yet sinners, our life is the soul and our nature is sin. We live by the soul. As far as the inclination and desire of our living are concerned, it is according to sin that we conduct ourselves. To make this point clearer, the decision to conduct ourselves is of sin, and the strength to follow this decision to conduct ourselves is from the soul. Sinful nature proposes, and the soul-life energizes. Sin counsels, and the soul executes. This is the condition of every unbeliever.

When a believer receives the grace of the substitutional death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, although he is still ignorant of the fact of co-crucifixion, God puts His own life in him to quicken his spirit. This new life comes with His new nature. Henceforth, in the believer there are two lives—the life of the spirit and the life of the soul, and two natures—the nature of God and the nature of sin.

These two natures—the old and the new—are different. They are in discord and cannot be reconciled. The new and the old contend all day long, trying to control the entire man. During this stage, the Christian is a babe in Christ and is fleshly. His experience at this time is very changeable and also very painful, alternating between victories and defeats. Later on when he knows the salvation of the cross—that if by faith he reckons the old man as crucified with Christ—he can be freed from this sin, causing the body to be paralyzed and to be as silent as death. Since the old man has been crucified, he has the power to overcome sin, and in his experience he proves the promise that "sin will not lord it over you."

Now the believer enters into a realm where sin is under his feet. All the passions and lusts of the flesh can no longer attract him. At this time, in this condition, the believer virtually thinks that he now is completely spiritual. As he looks back and sees many of his fellow-believers who are still entangled by sin, inevitably he is elated and considers himself to have arrived and reached the highest stage, being completely spiritual. Actually, it is quite different from what he thinks. Even up to this stage, inevitably he remains:

## A SOULISH CHRISTIAN

Why is this? It is because, even though the cross has worked and dealt with the sinful nature of the believer, the soul-life is still existing! Although all sins issue from the sinful nature and the soul merely follows its direction to execute its command, nevertheless the soul is, after all, inherited from Adam. Although the soul is not altogether defiled, it cannot avoid being affected by the fall of Adam. It is natural and quite different from the life of God. The defiled old man within the believer has become dead indeed, yet his soul is still the strength of his living. He is freed from the sinful nature, but the self-life still exists. Therefore, he cannot avoid being soulish. Although the old man no longer directs the soul, the soul is still the strength of his living. Since God's nature has replaced the sinful nature, spontaneously all the inclinations, desires, and ideas are good, unlike their former filthy state. However, the execution of the ideas, directions, and desires of his new nature continues to be by the same soul-life.

A life which depends on the soul can execute the direction of the spirit by natural (earthly) strength in an attempt to accomplish supernatural (divine) goodness. To put it plainly, the strength of self is used to fulfill God's demand. In this condition, even though the believer has overcome sin on the negative side, he is still immature in doing righteous deeds on the positive side. However, few are willing to sincerely acknowledge their weakness, immaturity, and uselessness and depend upon God. It is in his human nature that man considers himself to have strength. One who has not been humbled by the grace

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of God will never consider himself to be utterly useless. It is because of this that he has no heart to trust the Holy Spirit for doing righteous deeds but depends on the strength of self (soul) to correct and to improve all his former conduct. Thus, the danger at this time is that he tries to please God with his own power and does not know how to exercise the life of the soul, which is given to him by God and is already in him, to increasingly strengthen the life of the spirit through the Holy Spirit in order to follow the dictates of the new nature. At this time the spiritual life is newborn and has not reached the stage of maturity to be able to express all the virtues of God's nature. Besides, it is not truly able to do it. Therefore, because of the lack of patience, humility, and a heart of dependence, a believer does not know that regardless how good according to the human viewpoint his own efforts may appear, he can never please God. He consequently applies his natural, soulish power to fulfill God's requirements for His children. Such deeds and works are the mingling of what is of God with what is of man, expressing the heavenly wishes by the earthly strength. Since the deeds and behavior of the believer at this time are such, he remains not spiritual but soulish.

Many do not understand what the soul-life is. Simply put, the soul-life is what we commonly call the self-life. Many believers make the big mistake of not distinguishing sin from self. They think that sin and self are the same. However, they are different both in the teaching of the Bible and in spiritual experience. Sin is filthy, opposes God, and is utterly abominable. Self, however, may not necessarily be filthy, may not necessarily oppose God, and may not necessarily be abominable. On the contrary, many times self is quite honorable, wanting to help God, and quite lovely. For example, to study the Bible is a very good thing. We know that to study the Bible is not sinful. But very often when studying the Bible, one can do it by his own efforts. Although it is not sinful to understand the Bible with one's own intelligence, it is the work of self. Although it is not sinful to labor in order to save people, to do it according to one's own ideas and methods is surely full of self. At least we know that pursuing spiritual growth is surely not sinful, yet how often is such pursuit out of the fleshly self, perhaps because we do not want to fall behind others, or because spiritual growth may give us many advantages, or perhaps we may have some personal gain. To put it more clearly, it is known to all that to do good is not sinful. However, many good works are full of self. Sometimes the good works are the natural goodness of an individual and not what is given to him by the Holy Spirit at the time of regeneration. For example, there are many people who were merciful, patient, and meek before they believed in the Lord and were regenerated. Their mercy, patience, and meekness are natural, fleshly, of the self, and not of the spirit. Therefore, even though they may be merciful, patient, and meek, which is neither committing a sin nor sinful, they are filled with the works of the self-life. Sometimes believers perform good works not by utter dependence on the Spirit of God but by their own strength.

These are simply a few examples to illustrate how sin and self differ from one another. If we go on further in the spiritual journey, we will know that in many things sin has no way to gain a footing, yet the self somehow can be manifest. Actually, self can almost mix itself with the most sacred work and the most spiritual life.

Since the believer has long been under the bondage of sin, once he is delivered from the power of sin, he considers this to be the highest walk of life, not knowing that once he has been freed from sin, he still has to overcome self daily throughout his entire lifetime.

The greatest danger after a believer experiences being freed from sin is that he would now consider that all the dangerous elements within him are gone. He does not know that although the old man has died to "sin" and the body of "sin" has been paralyzed, "sin" has not died. Now "sin" is a deposed monarch

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who will exhaust all his energy, seizing all the opportunities to regain his throne. That is to say that the believer can continue having the experience of being delivered from "sin;" however, this does not mean that he is perfect, because he has yet to continually deal with the self.

It is a great pity that some believers in the Lord who pursue "holiness"—deliverance from sin—consider themselves to be holy when they have attained it. They do not know that deliverance from sin is only the first step of the victorious walk of life. Deliverance from sin is only the initial victory that God has given us in order that we may have more victories continually thereafter. Overcoming sin is a door, and once we take a step, we are in. Overcoming self is a pathway for us to walk on throughout our lifetime. After we have overcome sin, God calls us to daily overcome our self, which is often the self that is the best, most zealous, and most desirous of serving God.

If a believer knows only what it is to be delivered from sin but not what it is to "deny the self," to "lose the soul-life," then the danger is that at this time he will use the strength of the self, that is, the soul-life, to accomplish all of God's will in him, to do God's work, and to live out God in his daily living. He does not know that apart from sin there are two powers now within him: the power of the spirit and the power of the soul. The power of the spirit is the power of God which he received at his regeneration. The power of the soul is the power of self which he received naturally at his birth. This is the natural power he possesses without regeneration.

Whether or not a believer is able to go on to become a spiritual man depends on how he deals with these two kinds of power within him. If he rejects the power of the soul and depends solely on the power of the spirit, he will succeed in becoming a spiritual man. If he uses the power of the soul, or the power of the spirit concurrently with the power of the soul, he will become a soulish man—a fleshly man.

God's goal is that we reject everything that belongs to ourselves—all we are, all we have, and all we can do—and live entirely by Him, daily taking in the life which is in Christ through the Holy Spirit. If the believer does not apprehend this or is not willing to obey God in this way, henceforth his living will be serving God merely by the soul-life and the power of the self. He is not a spiritual person; rather, he is a soulish person.

Therefore, a spiritual Christian is one who lets the Holy Spirit operate in his spirit. He receives the person of the Holy Spirit to dwell in his spirit and allows the life given by the Holy Spirit to supply him the strength or power for his entire daily walk of life. By appropriating the power of the Holy Spirit, he lives on this earth not seeking his own will but the will of the Lord. He does not rely on his own cleverness to have any consideration or arrangement in serving God. Moreover, the principle of his entire living is no longer controlled and influenced by his emotion; rather, it is to live quietly in his spirit.

The soulish Christian is just the opposite. Although he has life in his spirit, he does not draw his life supply from the life in his spirit. In his daily living he continues to make the soul his life and depends on the power of the self for everything. He acts according to his own preference and does not learn to obey God from his heart. In God's work he still uses his natural cleverness to make many artful arrangements, and in his daily living he is manipulated and influenced by the stimuli of his emotion.

Now the problem of the two natures has been resolved, but the problem of the two lives still remains. Both the life of the spirit and the life of the soul live simultaneously within us. The life of the spirit is in

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itself exceedingly strong. However, because the soul-life has been deep-rooted in man, it operates and rules over his whole being. Unless one is willing to deny his soul-life and let the life of the spirit live and operate, the life of the spirit will find it difficult to have the opportunity to develop.

Such a teaching is extremely important because if the believer were to focus only on the problem of the old man, considering that overcoming all the external, filthy sins is the entirety of a Christian's spiritual walk in life, this would deprive him of the opportunity to advance beyond living in his soul, which God hates (as much as He hates sin). The believer must learn to know that overcoming sin (of course, this is most blessed) is merely a general state of every believer and is not something extraordinary. For a believer, then, to commit sin, to be the slave of sin, is something strange and abnormal. "We who have died to sin, how shall we still live in it?" To believe that the Lord Jesus died as our Substitute is to believe that we have died with the Lord Jesus. Otherwise, there is no substitution. Since we have believed the substitutional death of the Lord Jesus, that is, we have been crucified with the Lord Jesus already, is it not a strange thing that a dead person can still commit sin?

To be freed from sin is not a difficult matter, because a full salvation has been provided. A believer should proceed to learn the complete lesson—which may be more difficult but which is always deeper—to hate his own life. This is not just to hate his sinful nature which comes from Adam but also his natural life by which he lives. He should be willing not only to put away all sins of the flesh but also to deny all good works of the flesh which issue forth from his own life. It is not only to forsake all sins but also, from God's point of view, to deliver up this sinful life to death. The life which is really in the Holy Spirit not only does not commit sin but also does not allow the self to live. The Holy Spirit can manifest His power only in those who live by Him. Whoever lives by his natural life cannot expect to see any mighty works of the Holy Spirit. We should be delivered from everything natural as well as from everything unclean. If we still live according to "man" (not necessarily sinful man) in the natural realm, then the Holy Spirit cannot rule within us. If we are freed from sin, yet still think as "man" thinks, desire as "man" desires, live as "man" lives, work as "man" works, and do not rely entirely on the Holy Spirit of God to work in our life, how can the Holy Spirit manifest His power? What we desire is to be filled with the Holy Spirit, but we must first eliminate the permeation of the soul.

### **THE EXPERIENCE OF THE SPIRIT MIXED WITH THE SOUL**

We do not mean that the experience of a soulish believer is entirely of the soul, though believers of this type are many. Many soulish believers do have spiritual experiences. Nevertheless, they are mixed with soulish experiences.

They know in general the spiritual walk of life, and the Holy Spirit has enabled them to have a spiritual living. However, due to many hindrances, so often they still look to the natural life to supply them the power for their living, expecting to fulfill God's holy requirement by their own flesh. They still follow their own desires and thoughts to conduct themselves, and they still pursue and seek pleasure in their feelings and knowledge in their mind. They may be spiritual in knowledge, yet in reality they are still soulish. Although the Holy Spirit has been dwelling in their spirit and has caused them to experience freedom from sin by the work of the cross, inevitably sometimes they follow their soul and sometimes their spirit. With some it is because of the lack of understanding, but with many it is because of their unwillingness, for they love their own soul-life.

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Actually, spirit and soul are very easy to distinguish in experience. The spiritual walk of life is a living which solely follows the direction of the intuition in the spirit. If a believer walks according to the Spirit, he himself must stand in the position of one who assents, not deciding, initiating, and starting anything but rather waiting quietly for the voice of the Holy Spirit in his spirit. As soon as his intuition hears the inner voice, he rises up to work, obeying the direction of the intuition. In such a spiritual walk of life, the believer himself is always standing in the position of one who agrees. There is no other initiator except the Holy Spirit.

At the same time, he is not self-relying. He does not use his own power to follow God's will. Whenever action is needed, he comes to God solely, fully conscious of his own impotence, to ask God to give him a promise. Then based on the promise of God, he proceeds to act, counting on the power of the Holy Spirit as his. At such a time God will surely grant him power according to His Word.

The soulish walk of life is entirely the opposite. It altogether has self as the center. When a believer is soulish, he acts according to self. This means that his conduct originates from his self. His thought, his reasoning, and his desire alone govern his conduct. It is not the voice of the Holy Spirit in the "inner man" regulating his conduct, but the thought, reasoning, and desire of his own outward man which determine his action. Even his feeling of joy is for his own pleasure and for the fulfillment of his own preference.

We have pointed out clearly that the body is the shell of the soul and the soul is the shell of the spirit. As the Holy Place is outside of the Holy of Holies, so the soul is outside of the spirit. Hence, we can see how easy it is for the spirit to be influenced by the soul. The soul and the spirit of the soulish believers are tightly knit together. Although their soul has been delivered from the dominion of the body and is no longer under the control of the lusts of the body, their spirit has not been separated from their soul. Just as their soul was joined to their body (one as life, the other as nature), their spirit is joined to their soul (one provides power while the other gives the idea). Thus the soul often influences the spirit.

Because the spirit is surrounded by the soul, as if buried inside the soul, it is often influenced by the stimulus of the mind. A regenerated person inherently has an unspeakable peace in his spirit, yet because the spirit and the soul have not been divided, even a slight stimulation will disturb the peace and tranquility of his spirit. This is due to the soul having many independent desires and thoughts. Sometimes the soul is filled with joy; this influences the spirit and causes the believer to think that he is the happiest person in the world. However, when he experiences an irritation, he thinks he is the most miserable person in the world. A soulish believer often has such experiences.

When soulish believers hear the teaching of the dividing of spirit and soul, they want very much to know where their spirit is. However, having exhausted their search, it seems that they remain unable to sense having a spirit. Since many believers never have any real experience in the spirit, naturally they cannot distinguish their spirit from their soul. Moreover, since their spirit and their soul are still tightly woven as one, they consider the experiences of the soul (such as joy, vision, love, etc.) as the supreme spiritual experiences. Since they do not have any spiritual experience, they should simply admit this and not try to substitute their soul for their spirit, thus bringing loss to themselves.

Before a believer's walk of life becomes completely spiritual, he will have the experience of a mixed spirit and soul as described above. As far as his feeling is concerned, he will not be content with the

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tranquility in his spirit, but rather will seek for a kind of emotional pleasure. As to conducting himself in his daily living, sometimes he follows the leading of the intuition, but other times he follows his own thought, reasoning, and desire. Such an experience of a mixed spirit and soul indicates that there are two sources within the believer: one is of God, the other is of man; one is of the Holy Spirit, the other is of self; one is intuitive, the other rational; one is spiritual, the other is natural—one is of the spirit, the other is of the soul. Before a believer arrives at perfection, sometimes he follows this and sometimes that. If a believer carefully examines himself in the light of God, he will see that he has these two lives within him. Thus, sometimes he lives by this life and sometimes by that life. Sometimes he realizes that he should live by faith with a trustful heart through the Holy Spirit, and other times he lives according to himself and to what he himself calls spiritual feelings. With such a living, he is more often in the soul than in the spirit. The degree to which a believer is soulish depends on his understanding of the life of the spirit, including the principle of cooperating with God, and also on how he acts and makes decisions according to the soul-life. The activities of his natural life in his various faculties determines the extent of his being soulish. Some can live entirely in the world of feelings and ideals; some live sometimes by their soul and at other times by their spirit. Unless a believer is taught by God Himself and receives the revelation of the Holy Spirit in his spirit, he cannot know how abominable the soul-life is and be willing to live entirely in the spirit.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE EXPERIENCE OF SOULISH BELIEVERS**

#### **THE LIVING OF THE SOULISH BELIEVERS**

The living of the soulish believers cannot be the same for everyone, due to individual differences. Each man in the world has his own personality. When one believes in the Lord and is regenerated (unto eternity), his personality is not annihilated. Otherwise, eternity future would not be interesting at all! Therefore, the soulish living of the believers differs with individuals. For this reason, we can speak only in general terms, mentioning those matters which are more prominent in the soulish living and describing briefly the experiences of different aspects in order that the children of God may compare their own experiences with these.

Soulish believers have a characteristic of being curious. They study biblical prophecies to know the things of the future that they may have the ideal information to satisfy their curious mind. Their apparel, speech, and conduct indicate that they have an attitude of being different and superior. They seek to achieve startling, instant success with many of their activities. Even before they believe in the Lord, they already have such an inclination, and afterwards it is still hard for them to overcome their natural life. They are not like spiritual believers who do not seek to understand any matter inquisitively. Soulish believers do not seek to reconcile their experiences with God's teaching, but pay attention mostly to the understanding in their mind; that is, they like to reason. What saddens them the most is not that their experience fails to catch up with their ideals, but rather that they cannot understand with their ideals and their mind the spiritual experience they lack. Having the error of some kind of self-deception, they think that whatever they understand mentally is what they have experienced. Actually, this is a great error.

Soulish believers often have an attitude of self-righteousness, though sometimes it cannot be detected

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easily from the outside. They are very stubborn with their trivial opinions. We should hold fast to the major truths recorded in the Bible, but we certainly can let others have the liberty concerning minor points. Although we think our understanding is very clear and that what we believe is without any mistake, to strain out a gnat and swallow a camel displeases the Lord. We should lay aside differences on small points and pursue the oneness on major points.

The mind of soulish believers is often disturbed by evil spirits so that their thoughts become confused, mixed up, and sometimes defiled. In their conversation they answer what is not questioned, and their mind travels at high speed, changing topics every so often and proving how scattered their thoughts are. Even when they pray and read the Bible, their body is present, but their mind is far away. In their deeds, either dealing with men or matters, they do not think—they act without forethought. Yet when others speak to them about their conduct and how one should conduct himself, they can select similar incidents from their deeds to illustrate how carefully they consider and act according to principle. Occasionally, they indeed think before they act. The conduct of the soulish believers is often very fickle.

Soulish believers are touched easily. Sometimes they are very excited and happy, while other times they are very depressed and sad. When they are happy, it seems the world is too small to hold them, and they want to fly away to heaven. But when they are sad, it seems they are superfluous in the world. Sometimes they are extremely happy and stirred in their emotion, as if a fire were burning or a treasure had been found. Sometimes when their heart is not burning, they suddenly have a feeling of loss and become dejected and unhappy. Their joy and their dejection depend on their feelings. They do not have a living which is steady and unchanging. Their joy and their grief govern their living.

Most soulish believers are over-sensitive. They are very difficult to deal with because they think everything around them is directed at them. If they are slightly neglected, they become angry. They readily suspect that others' attitude toward them has changed; thus they become sorrowful, sad, and resentful. They can easily become intimate with others. They live in human affection to the extent that it becomes difficult for them to separate from others. If there is a slight change in such a relationship, it causes an unspeakable pain in their soul. Nevertheless, they think this is to suffer for the Lord.

God knows the weakness of the soulish believers—they often are self-centered, thinking that they are very special when they have some spiritual progress. Therefore, He often gives them special grace to enable them to have many extraordinary experiences, such as the feeling of joy and the feeling that the Lord is very near, very real, and touchable, in order that they may humble themselves and draw near to God who has given them the grace. However, these believers do not act according to God's desire. They do not give glory to God and draw near to Him simply because He has given them grace. On the contrary, they utilize the grace of God as the basis of their own boasting. They think that they have received such grace simply because they are stronger than others and that since they have such experiences they are therefore more spiritual than others. Soulish believers mostly have sensuous joy and special experiences. All these cause them to think that they are more spiritual than others. Little do they know that actually these are the evidences of their being soulish. The spiritual ones are those who live by faith and not by feelings.

Sometimes it is not the feeling that causes the soulish believers to change. Oftentimes their heart is divided by external affairs. People, things, and affairs in the world often invade their inner man, causing them to lose the peace in their spirit. If you place a soulish believer in a joyful environment, he

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will be joyful, but if you place him in a difficult situation, he will be sorrowful. He lacks the power to create his own environment. He becomes red when he is close to vermilion, and he becomes black when he is close to ink.

Soulsh believers often live a kind of emotional life. Before the believers become spiritual, the Lord often enables them to feel His presence. Soulsh believers delight in this kind of feeling the most. When they have such a feeling, they think that they have reached the supreme state and have made great strides on the way to spirituality. Although there are times that the Lord does not give them such a feeling, because they have not reached a complete life of faith, very often the Lord gives them the feeling of His presence in order to gradually train them not to rely on feelings but to depend on faith alone. However, they do not understand the intention of the Lord. They think that when they have such a feeling, their spiritual condition is at the highest point; otherwise, they think it is at the lowest.

A very common mark of soulsh believers is talkativeness. It is not that they do not know that they should be taciturn, but when they are emotionally excited, they have a great urge to get into endless speaking. Once they talk, they lack the power of self-control. Their mind seems to lose control when their mouth opens, pouring out endless words like an avalanche. It is not that they have not considered what to speak but rather that once they speak they cannot restrain themselves. Whatever they speak proceeds out from the thoughts which they have been thinking all day long. They know that they should not be garrulous, but once they indulge in speaking, they cannot withdraw. However, when other people talk too much, they realize that it is inappropriate, and they criticize secretly in their heart. Since their words are many, offense is unavoidable. They lose either harmony with others because of arguments or love because of criticism, or they even lose control of their heart because of talkativeness. Since soulsh believers are talkative, sudden thoughts surely come to them in their conversation, causing them to change topics or expand the thought in their conversation.

Although soulsh believers know that saints should be godly and should not speak words of jesting, they always like to speak and to hear jokes when conversing with others. They like to hear any kind of lively or youthful talk, or whatever talk can cheer their mood. Jestng is indispensable to soulsh believers. Yet this is not absolutely true, because sometimes they abhor ungodly talk, except that they cannot do so consistently. Whenever their emotion is stirred, inevitably they follow the way of merriment to pursue pleasure.

Soulsh believers are fond of "pleasant looks" and have a concept of aesthetics. They like to follow the artistic view of the worldly people and change their own taste accordingly. They do not have the attitude of being dead toward the human concept of beauty. Therefore, it is unavoidable that they are often proud of having the view of an artist.

Soulsh believers often act in extreme ways. They go either to one extreme or the other. They may either admire art extremely or not care for beauty at all. Even their shabby clothes may not bother them. Instead, they consider this as their suffering with the Lord. Little do they know that believers should pursue cleanliness (not beauty).

Soulsh believers who are intellectual express their being soulsh by assuming themselves to be "Bohemians." When there is a breezy morning or a moonlit night, they will invariably chant in a heroic or mournful tone. Oftentimes they grumble about their lives and even shed tears of anguish uncontrollably. They love literature and admire its beauty. They also like to hum and intone as if by

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reciting some poems they have the marvelous feeling of transcending the worldly. They also enjoy traveling and the sights of mountains and rivers to thus be closer to nature. Very often they have the thought of escaping from the world and living in seclusion because they see the worsening condition of the world. While they are pondering such thoughts, they think how transcendent and how noble they are! It seems that all the other believers are defiled and unbearably vulgar. Such believers often consider themselves very spiritual, not realizing how utterly soulish they are! Furthermore, it is very difficult for such soulish ones to enter into a wholly spiritual realm. They are completely controlled by their emotion. Their danger is that they are complacent and do not realize their peril.

After soulish believers have learned the doctrine concerning the differentiation between the spirit and the soul, they can easily understand such a teaching with their natural mind. Spontaneously they can find many soulish activities in other people's lives and easily understand other's soulish acts and thoughts, but they do not realize that they are as soulish as the ones whom they accuse of being soulish and that they are actually no less soulish than others.

Most soulish believers have a great deal of spiritual knowledge, but their experiences can never match what they know. Because they know much, they also condemn much in their eyes. Thus, criticizing others becomes a common characteristic of soulish believers. They receive grace to have knowledge, but unlike spiritual believers, they do not receive grace to have humility. Therefore, there is a certain hardness in their dealings with people. To those who are closely associated with them, they give the impression of having a certain "stiffness," a hard shell. They are not like spiritual believers whose outer shell has been broken so that they are approachable and kind to others.

Regardless how much soulish believers give credit to the grace of God and give glory to God outwardly, all their thoughts are always centered on "self." Whether they consider themselves good or bad, their thoughts can never depart from themselves. They have not yet lost themselves in God.

Soulish believers are very proud. Since their thoughts are always centered on themselves, they cannot help but be proud. What hurts them the most is being set aside either in work or in the evaluation of others. It is very unbearable to them when other people misunderstand them and talk about their shortcomings. They are not yet like their more spiritual brothers who gladly accept what God has arranged for them, whether exaltation or rejection. They are not willing to be despised by others, to appear inferior. Even when they have received more grace of God to know the actual condition of their natural life so that they realize how corrupt they are and humble themselves before God, even regarding themselves as the worst in the world, they think that they are more humble than others and boast in their humility! Pride is often in the deepest part of their heart, unknown to others or even to themselves.

## **THE WORKS OF SOULISH BELIEVERS**

Soulish believers are not behind others in the matter of works. They are very active, zealous, and willing. However, this is not to say that they labor this way because of God's command. Rather, they do so as they like and according to their own enthusiasm. They think that it is always good to do God's work, but they do not know that it is really good only when they do the work which God gives them. They do not have a heart of trusting nor a time of quietness. They have not sincerely sought the will of God. They work according to their own ideas; their mind is full of plans and schemes because they labor in such a way that they consider themselves far more advanced than idle brothers. Little do they

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know that if they have obtained God's grace, it is easier for them to have a spiritual walk in life than zealous believers.

The works of soulish believers are mainly based upon feelings. They are able to work when they feel happy within; otherwise, they stop completely. When they have the sensation of a burning in their heart and are thrilled with an unspeakable joy, they can witness to people for hours without feeling weary. However, if they do not have such a feeling and instead feel a coldness in their heart and are not excited, even when facing the greatest need, such as someone dying, they simply speak a few words or even do not speak at all. Once they have the feeling, they can run a thousand miles; otherwise, they will not move even a step. They cannot ignore their feelings and talk to the Samaritan woman with an empty stomach or speak to Nicodemus with weary eyes.

Soulsh believers enjoy busy work. However, unlike spiritual believers, whenever there is much to do they cannot maintain the quietness in their spirit to accomplish God's command unhurriedly. Whenever there is much to do, their heart is greatly disturbed. When there is confusion in outward affairs, their hearts also become confused. Their heart is governed by external matters. "Drawn about with much serving" (Luke 10:40) and "troubled" in heart are the characteristics of the works of every soulsh believer.

Soulsh believers are easily discouraged in their works. They do not have a steadfast faith to trust God who is able to accomplish His own work. They do not understand God's "law of faith." They are regulated by their own feelings and the external environment. Whenever they feel they have failed, although this may not necessarily be true, they become discouraged. When they see the outward environment is gloomy, they faint. They have not yet rested in God.

Soulsh believers do not have long-range views; therefore, they are easily discouraged. What they see is merely in the present. The present victory causes them to rejoice, and the present defeat makes them sad. They have not yet learned to see the end of a matter with faith. They desire to have some momentary victory to comfort the longing of their heart. Without this, they cannot trust God in the dark and go on unwearily.

It is very easy for soulsh believers to find shortcomings in others although they are not necessarily stronger than others. They are apt to criticize others and rarely can forgive. They cannot follow others' original intentions. When they investigate and correct the shortcomings in others, they often have a sense of self-satisfaction, exaltation, and pride. Sometimes when they help people, what they do may be good and legitimate, but often their motive is not proper.

Soulsh believers are often hasty. They cannot wait on God. They always do things in a hurried, flustered, and urgent manner. Even in doing the works of God, they are pushed by their enthusiasm and ardor and simply cannot wait for God's clear directing, leading, and opening of the way.

The minds of soulsh believers are often completely occupied with their works. They consider, plan, deliberate, and anticipate. In their mind they often remember their work—the successes, the failures, or other results. Sometimes they envision the future of their works. When they think of the bright side, they are joyful beyond control. When they think of the dark side, they are overcome by sorrows. In either case, they may even neglect their sleeping and eating. At any rate, their mind is fully occupied with their work. Do they think that much of their Lord? Many times this is not the case. They think more of their work than of their Lord. In their view, the work of the Lord is very important, but often

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they forget the Lord who gives him work. The work of the Lord becomes the center of everything, while the Lord of the work becomes secondary.

Since soulish believers lack real spiritual insight, their actions unconsciously follow the direction of the "sudden thoughts" of their mind. Hence, they often speak inappropriate words in their work. Their words do not meet others' need. Nevertheless, because they themselves presume that there "ought" to be such a need in people, they utter useless words in trying to help others. They may reproach when one needs sympathy; they may comfort when one should be admonished. This is because they lack spiritual understanding and depend too much on their own limited thoughts. Even after their words have proven to be futile, they still are not convinced.

Soulish believers make many plans and have many opinions. Therefore, it is very difficult for them to work with others. They have what they themselves presume to be right, so they expect others to fully agree with them. Their condition for working together with others is that others must absolutely agree with their views. To them, even a minor idea is crucially related to the truth once delivered to the saints. They cannot allow others to proceed to work if there is any difference in opinion. They know that there must be no opinion, but if any opinion needs to die, it is not theirs. They realize that sects are not scriptural, but it is not their particular sect that must die. Whatever they do not believe, they consider as heresy. However, those who are soulish as they are reject their belief. Not only so, affection is very important in their work. They love to have their own small clique, their own so-called inner circle. They are not able to work together with other children of God. They love to partition God's children according to their liking.

In preaching, soulish believers cannot depend completely on God. They rely either on their own illustrations, interpretations, and clever ideas or on their own persuasive power. Perhaps there are a few famous ones who rely completely on themselves—"Because I said so, people must listen." They may depend on God but also on themselves. Therefore, it is necessary for them to have very skillful preparations. The time they spend in prayer, in seeking God's will, in waiting for the power from above is less than the time they spend on preparing outlines, in gathering materials, and in hard and careful thinking. They memorize the entire message and simply recite it at the time of preaching. The mind occupies the primary place in such work.

Naturally, in such preaching, one relies on the message more than on the Lord. The entire heart of these believers depends on what they preach to move human hearts instead of on the Holy Spirit to reveal to men their need and the Lord's supply to fill up their lack. What they emphasize and trust is their own speaking, which may be entirely the truth. However, without the enlivening by the Holy Spirit, such truth is of no profit. To rely on the words instead of on the Holy Spirit produces very few spiritual results. People may welcome or accept such speaking, but it can only reach their mind.

Soulish believers are fond of using sensational words in their preaching, whereas real spiritual believers can give very clear and lucid teaching which none may have ever conceived of before, because the Lord has given them much experience. Soulish believers like to imitate this in their work because imitating is one of their characteristics. They think that only this kind of speaking will be fascinating to the listeners. In preaching they like to use strange imaginations. If some peculiar thoughts come upon them while walking, talking, eating, or sleeping, they will surely jot them down for future use, not questioning whether such thoughts are revealed in their spirit by the Holy Spirit and are experienced by them or are merely sudden thoughts which come to their mind.

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Some soulish believers delight in helping others, but because they themselves have not reached the state of maturity, in helping others they do not know how to dispense food in due season. This is not to say that they do not have knowledge; actually they have much knowledge. When they see anything wrong in others or are told of some difficulty, they pretend to be experienced believers trying to help. Based upon their limited insight and some ability of discernment which they have learned from more experienced believers, they speak fluently about biblical teachings and the experiences of the saints. In helping others, soulish believers often tell all that they know and perhaps sometimes go beyond to tell what they do not know, which is merely their supposition. When they are helping others, they always pour forth everything which has been stored in their mind and exhibit one thing after another. They do not ask at all whether this is the particular illness of this particular person. Or, is this the need of this one? Or, is this one able to suddenly take in so many teachings? They are like Hezekiah who opened all his storehouses and showed all his treasures.

Sometimes it is not that there is someone drawing them out to speak, but they are stirred suddenly by their emotion, and they pour out so many spiritual doctrines, perhaps many of which are merely ideals. Sometimes such behavior is simply to show off their own knowledge.

However, this differs according to individuals. Some can be completely silent, not uttering a word. Even when there is a tremendous need, when they should speak to help others, they keep their mouth tightly closed. They are suppressed by their natural shyness and fear; therefore, they are not free. They can sit beside those talkative believers and criticize them in their heart, but their taciturnity is not in any way less soulish.

Because soulish believers have not been deeply rooted in God and have not learned how to be hidden in God, they are often visible. Even when they are doing spiritual work, they always seek to occupy the conspicuous position. When they attend a meeting, they do not expect to hear others but rather to be heard by others. They are overjoyed when they are held in high esteem.

Soulish believers love to learn to use spiritual terminology. They delight in learning all the terms, phrases, and special expressions. When there is an appropriate occasion, they will use them one after another. While working, they use spiritual words as the material for their speaking, although perhaps without their heart. This is also true in their praying.

Soulish believers are very ambitious, always desiring to stand out among men. They have a strong sense of vainglory in the Lord's work. They aspire to be powerful workers, greatly used by the Lord. What is the reason? They want to gain some position for themselves, that is some glory. They like to compare themselves with others—probably not so much with those whom they do not know, but with their co-workers and those they know. Such comparison and secret competition are very fierce. They look down at those who are behind them, regarding them as falling far too short. Compared with those who have higher and deeper spiritual experiences, they think they are in no way inferior. They always desire to be great and to be the head. They hope that their work will be prosperous and that it will be presentable. Naturally these things are deeply hidden in their heart, unknown to others. Of course, sometimes these thoughts are mingled with other purer thoughts. Nevertheless, the prevalence of such thoughts is a fact.

It is easy for soulish believers to become self-satisfied. If the Lord were to use them to save a person, they would be exceedingly happy. If they were to succeed once, they would be elated, considering

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themselves successful in the spiritual world. Should they know a little or learn a little, they think that they have reached a very profound stage. A common indication of soulish believers is that they, like a small vessel, are easily filled. They do not have the view of seeing how great the depth of the ocean is. As long as there is some water in their bucket, they are complacent. They have not yet lost themselves in God. Otherwise, whatever happens will be to them as if nothing has happened. Their eyes remain focused on their puny selves. Therefore, they are affected very easily by a small gain or loss. Such a capacity is the reason God cannot use them more. If they become so happy and boast to such an extent when ten persons are saved, what will happen if a thousand persons are saved?

After some successful work in their preaching, soulish believers always have a thought that they are very wonderful. Often they dwell upon their superiority and self-delight, thinking that they are different from others, "greater than the greatest apostle," to sum this up in one word—wonderful. Sometimes they are sad because others do not regard them so. They think that others treat them in this way simply because they are without eyes to recognize that they are the prophets from Nazareth. Sometimes they think that in their message there are several ideas which no one has ever discovered, and if the audience cannot appreciate the marvelous points, they become troubled. After some successful work, they will dwell in their self-satisfaction for a day or two, or at least they will feel self-contented for a few hours. Under such a condition they often think that soon the church of God will see a great evangelist, revivalist, or writer in them. If no one pays attention to them, how sorrowful they are!

Soulish believers are believers without principles. Their words and deeds do not follow definite principles. Their walk of life is according to their emotion and mind. However, they feel or think, they act, perhaps contrary to their usual conduct. Change can easily be noticed in soulish believers after they have done a work. They will become whatever they preach. If they preach a message on patience, they surely will be very patient for one or two days afterwards. If they exhort people to praise God, immediately afterwards they will continually praise God. But these do not last long. This is because they live according to their emotions. Their own words stir up their emotion so that they live in such a way. However, once the emotion has passed, everything is over.

A particular point with soulish believers is that they have many gifts. Believers who are bound by sins do not have so many gifts, and neither do spiritual believers. God gives soulish believers more gifts with the intention that they may voluntarily deliver all the gifts to death and regain them more gloriously in resurrection. However, these believers are not willing to deliver the gifts to death, but rather, exhaustively use them. The gifts originally given by God should have been used by God for His own glory. However, soulish believers consider the gifts to be their own, but the work they do to be of God. Therefore, they do not trust the Holy Spirit to lead and use them but instead act according to their own ideas. Furthermore, when the work is successful they render glory to themselves.

Of course, this kind of self-glorification, self-boasting, and self-admiration is done secretly. Regardless how humble they are and how much they render glory to God, they cannot help being self-centered in their thoughts: "The glory should be unto God, this is right, but unto God and me!"

Since they have many gifts, good thoughts, and rich emotions, they can easily arouse people's interest and stir their heart. Therefore, soulish believers are often very attractive. When they work, they are easily welcomed by common believers. Actually they lack spiritual power, not having the power of the Holy Spirit's flowing rivers of living water. What they have is limited to themselves. What people see is what they "have," and it stops there in them so that they cannot cause others to receive spiritual life.

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They outwardly appear very rich, but actually they are extremely dry.

We must add a few words here: believers do not have to wait to be fully delivered from the domination of sin to become soulish believers and have the above-mentioned experiences. According to the actual experience of the believers, many are, on the one hand, under the domination of the body to commit sins and, on the other hand, under the influence of the soul to live by themselves. If we look at this according to the teaching of the Bible, it is even clearer because both are of the "flesh." Sometimes they may commit sins, and at other times they may follow themselves. Sometimes they either follow the body or the soul. In fact, many believers are such. If a believer can commit sin on the one hand and be soulish on the other hand, then he can also be soulish on the one hand and have some spiritual experiences on the other hand. At any rate, the experience of a believer is a very complicated matter. This, of course, refers to the details, but the main point is the same in principle. The most important question to ask ourselves is whether we have been purged from those things of dishonor. If not, then we still belong to those things of dishonor. Even if we have spiritual experience, we are still not spiritual. It is only when we no longer have the experience of sin and self that we are spiritual. Therefore, a believer may have many marvelous feelings of the soul yet still have many lusts of the body. He can also have many spiritual experiences yet still have the feelings of the soul. Of course, there are some who are delivered from one realm and then enter into the other.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE DANGERS OF SOULISH LIVING**

#### **THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SOUL-LIFE**

We have mentioned before how the soul-life is manifested. Now let me sum it up in the following sentence. The manifestation of the soul-life can very generally be classified into four categories: (1) using one's own natural ability; (2) being obstinate, stubborn, and disobedient to God; (3) pretending to be wise, having many opinions and plans; and (4) seeking spiritual experience through feelings. This is because (1) the soul-life itself is the natural ability, and the organ of the soul is divided into (2) the will, (3) the mind, and (4) the emotion.

Because the main parts of the soul are the mind, the emotion, and the will, many Christians, even though they are all soulish, have experiences that are quite different from one another. Some are inclined toward the mind, some lean toward the emotion, and some are bent toward the will. Although these aspects of living are totally different, they all are soulish living. Perhaps a believer who has an inclination toward the mind may discern another who inclines toward the emotion as being soulish, and in the meantime the one having an inclination toward the emotion may, in return, discern the mind-inclined one as being soulish. Actually these two persons are both soulish. The most important thing for believers to do is apply the light revealed by God to illuminate their true condition so that the truth might set them free, instead of using their new knowledge as the yardstick to criticize others. If the children of God are willing to apply God's light to illuminate themselves, their spiritual life will not be as it is today.

The seeking of the mind and its receiving and spreading of truth are the main manifestations of one's being soulish. Even the most spiritual experience and the highest truth merely become a cultivation of

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the mind. Although one's life is not unaffected, his original goal is to satisfy the mind. When believers are soulish and are controlled by the mind, their mind is full of spiritual desires. But they rely on their own thought more than on God's revelation. What they plan with their mind is more than their prayer and dependence on God.

The experiences that are most often misunderstood as being spiritual relate to the emotion. A believer who is soulish and inclined toward the emotion is always seeking for feelings in his life. He wants to feel the presence of God in his heart or in his bodily organs, to feel the burning of "love-fire," to feel happy, to feel a high spirit, and to feel the work moving smoothly. The truly spiritual believer sometimes has these kinds of feelings also, but he does not depend on these kinds of feelings to go on and to be glad. The emotional believer can serve the Lord only when he has these kinds of feelings. When he does not have such feelings, he will not go on even one step further.

The will is a common manifestation of the soulish life. The will is the organ of one's self-governing. Thus, through the will a soulish believer makes "self" the focal point of all his thoughts, words, acts, and living. What he wants to understand is for himself. What he desires to feel is for his own enjoyment. The work he does is according to his own plan. The goal of his behaving is to glorify himself. His focal point is himself.

We have already seen that in the Bible the word soul is translated as living thing and animal. Therefore, the meaning of this word in the original language was "the animal life." This makes us understand what the manifestation of the soul-life really is. We may use one very fitting sentence to demonstrate the life and work of a soulish believer: they are nothing but "animal activities" or "animal liveliness." He makes many plans, he does much work, his mind is busy, and his emotion is distracted—his whole being within and without is full of restlessness and confusion. When his emotion is stirred up, the other parts of his being are surely excited. But when his emotion is cooled down, even though his feelings may become cooler, he is still very bewildered in his mind and in his will. The soulish believer's living is full of activity all day long. He is active either in his body, or in his mind and emotion. This kind of life is nothing but a life full of "animal liveliness," far away from the spiritual life of God as the Lord of everything.

In conclusion, the work of the soul is to cause the believer to live by his own natural life; to work and to serve God by his own ability and will; to seek to know the Lord, draw close to the Lord, and know the Lord's presence by his feelings; and to use the ability of his mind to understand the Word of God, to calculate, to plan, and to infer.

If a believer does not receive God's revelation of Himself and thus serves God and does work for God through the ability of his created life, he will cause himself to suffer the greatest spiritual loss, and what he does will lack true spiritual fruit. A believer must be under God's revelation so that he can realize that it is very shameful before God for him to use the ability of the created animal life to please God and to do spiritual work. When we see an ambitious child having high self-esteem and being boastful and self-exalted, we feel shameful for him. This is the same way God looks at our "animal activities!" May we have more experiences of being in the ashes than of being preeminent before others.

## **THE FOOLISHNESS OF BELIEVERS**

Many believers cannot perceive the damage of their soulish experiences. They only consider that to sin

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in doing "things of the flesh" could pollute the spirit, and this is the thing that should be truly rejected and eliminated. The soul-life is the common life of all people, and all animals have this life. Is it not reasonable for us to live by this life? We are not committing any sins, just living by the natural life. Is anything wrong with this? If a believer merely receives teachings in his mind, then no matter whether he opposes or agrees, he can never see in his heart the reason for the biblical teaching that the soul-life should be rejected. For instance, if he does transgress the law of God and sin against God, that, of course, is not right. But if he tries his best to do good and develop all the good virtues within him, what is wrong with this? As he is fervently doing work for God, even though he does not depend on God's power, he thinks he is doing God's work. Maybe there are many things which are really not God's will for him to do. However, what he is doing is not sinful but is the best. What can be wrong with this? Since God has given me many gifts and intelligence, why am I not allowed to work with these? While I work, is this not the right time for me to utilize my talents? If one does not have any talent, of course, there is nothing to say. But if one has talents, is this not a good opportunity for him to bring forth his talents and use them?

Furthermore, of course, it was wrong in the past that one did not pay attention to the Word of God. But now, how can it be wrong for him to use his mind most diligently to seek the meaning of the Bible? Can there be evil in reading the Bible? As there is much truth which I do not yet understand, if I did not exercise my mind to study it, would it not be the case that I have to wait for a long time before I have the opportunity to understand it? When God gave us a mind, did He not intend for us to use it? When we use our mind to plan God's work, we are not committing a sin. Rather, it is all for God's sake. Why can we not do this?

Furthermore, it is also out of our most sincere heart to seek the feeling of the presence of God. When my life has sometimes left me dry and my work became of no interest, God many times has caused me to have a feeling of the love of the Lord Jesus as though there were a warm fire burning in my heart, making me feel very happy. I could feel that He was with me as though I could have touched Him. Is this not the peak point of our spiritual life? Many times when I lost this kind of feeling, I felt that my life was very dry, tasteless, cold, and without merit. At such times, I would earnestly desire, seek, and pray in order to get back this kind of good feeling. How can this be wrong?

The above are the things which many believers may want to say in their hearts, for they cannot differentiate between what is spiritual and what is soulish. They have not yet received the personal revelation from the Holy Spirit that can make them aware of the evil of their natural life. They have to be before God more often and be willing to learn more, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to them how many evil things are in their own natural good lives. To do this, one must be honest, humble, and willing to eliminate what the Holy Spirit enlightens him to eliminate. Having done this, the Holy Spirit will at a suitable time show him how corrupt his own natural life is.

The Holy Spirit will let such a one realize that all his work and life are merely centered on and motivated by his "self," and that he does not allow the Lord to be Lord over all things. All the good deeds he has done are done according to himself. Many among them may be simply for his own glory. All the works he does are done not by the way of seeking God's will, not by being willing to submit to God, follow God's leading, and trust in God's power. He does nothing except what is according to his own will, having his own way in everything. Thus, all his outward prayer and seeking God's will are merely hypocritical. Although he applies the gift given to him by God, he only single-mindedly thinks and boasts of the gift he received, and he sets aside the Lord who gave the gift. Although he has many

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gifts, he simply uses these gifts and never cares for the will of the Lord who gave him the gifts. Although he zealously seeks the words of the Lord, he is not willing to wait for God's time. His asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to him and to make him understand is merely to seek for knowledge so as to satisfy the desire of his mind. Although he seeks God's presence, wanting to feel the Lord's love and closeness, this is not for the Lord. He simply wants to make himself happy. It is not because he loves the Lord, but it is because he loves that kind of feeling, for that feeling makes him feel refreshed, happy, and as having the glory of "the third heavens." All his living and work are only centered on himself, hoping to make himself happy.

It is after a revelation of the Holy Spirit that the believer realizes how abominable his own life is and understands the former foolishness of upholding his own soul-life. This kind of revelation does not come suddenly but gradually. It does not happen once for all, but occurs again and again. When the Holy Spirit shines on a believer with light for the first time, he repents in the light and is willing to put the soul-life to death. But since man's heart is very wicked, after a little while, perhaps just a few days, the heart of self-confidence, self-love, and self-amusement in the believer returns again. Therefore, this kind of revelation comes frequently so that the believer may be willing to renounce his soul-life. But the most pitiful situation is that there is hardly anyone who would automatically submit to the Lord and have the sight of the Lord in these matters. It is always after the Holy Spirit has allowed the believer to fall numerous times and experience many defeats that he becomes willing to renounce his soul-life. But even if he is willing, how incomplete the willingness is, and how easily the willingness is liable to change!

Believers should abandon foolishness. We should accept God's viewpoint and consider our life as truly unable to please God. We should have a heart without fear to let the Holy Spirit expose all the pitiful places of our soul-life one by one. We should by faith trust God's appraisal of our life and be willing to wait for the Holy Spirit to reveal our life to us through the Word. Only by this will He be able to lead us on the pathway of deliverance from our soul-life.

## THE DANGER OF A BELIEVER'S BEING SOULISH

When believers have not reached or are not willing to reach what God wants them to reach, they are inevitably in danger. Since God's goal is for the believers to live in the spirit, not in the soul, neither in the body, if they do not live in the spirit, they will suffer loss. There are at least three kinds of danger:

### A. The Danger of Being Suppressed in Spirit

All works of the Holy Spirit are done in the spirit of man. The order of God's working is first to have the Holy Spirit moving in the human spirit, then to shine as light in the mind (soul), and then to have His work being carried out by the body. This order is very important.

Since a believer is born of the Spirit, he should walk by the Spirit. Only in this way will he then be able to understand God's will, work with the Holy Spirit, and overcome all the schemes of the enemy. The spirit of a believer should be very living. Believers should know how to follow the activity of the spirit and not quench its action, thus letting the Holy Spirit carry out His work through the spirit. The Holy Spirit needs the cooperation of the human spirit so that He can make the believers victorious in their ordinary everyday living, always ready, able to work on command. (Before long, we will talk about the problem of the spirit.)

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However, many believers do not understand the work of the spirit and cannot distinguish between what is spiritual and what is soulish. Sometimes they even misinterpret what is spiritual as soulish, and soulish as spiritual. Consequently, they greatly utilize much soulish ability to live and work, and even suppress the life of the spirit. They actually walk according to the soul, but they think that they walk according to the spirit. This kind of foolishness causes one's spirit to be unable to work together with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, this stops the work of the Holy Spirit on him.

When a believer lives in the soul, he always walks according to the thoughts, imaginations, plans, and visions of his mind. He seeks after all the happy feelings and walks according to those feelings. The end result is that if he often has the experience of these feelings, he will be happy. If he does not, then he will feel weighted down as if he can not even crawl. Therefore, this causes him to not live in his spiritual life but to live in his feelings, changing his living according to feelings. This is to say that a believer no longer acts and behaves according to the central point, the spirit within him, but is attracted to live in the feelings of his outward soul and body. Thus, the spiritual consciousness is overcome by the soul and body. This causes a believer to become very dull to the consciousness of the spirit. As a result, all the consciousness he has is that of the soul or of the body, thus causing him to lose the true consciousness of the spirit toward God. In this way, the cooperation of the spirit and God will be lost. The growth of the spiritual life will be suppressed and impeded. The spirit will be unable to work to make the believer obtain ability and guidance to fight the battle and to worship. If the spirit does not have the complete freedom to rule within a man, if a man does not draw out the power of the spirit and live a life in this world which lets the Spirit be the master of everything, he cannot grow into maturity. Since the consciousness of the spirit is very fine and delicate, unless a man learns how to follow and discern this sense, how will he be able to detect it, especially when there is an additional outside disturbance of the feelings of his soul-life, which are rough and tough? Not only will the feeling of the soul confuse the consciousness of the spirit, but it will also suppress it.

## **B. The Danger of Shrinking Back into the Sphere of the Body**

Many of the things we see in Galatians 5 as "works of the flesh" are naturally the lusts which issue out of man's body. However, not a few of them are also the work of the soul. "Factions, divisions, sects" (v. 20), etc., clearly issue out of man's soul, that is, his personality. Because the believers have many different thoughts and opinions, these things result. But what we need to pay attention to is that these issues of the soul are ranked together with the sins of the body: "fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ... bouts of drunkenness, carousings"! This reminds us how deeply connected the soul and the body are. Actually speaking, there is no possibility that the soul and the body can be separated. This is because the body we now have is the "soulish body" (1 Cor. 15:44). Therefore, if a believer only seeks to overcome his sinful nature but does not seek to overcome his natural life, then, even though he might have the experience of temporarily overcoming his sins, it will not be too long before he again falls into the sphere of the body and of sin. Of course, he may not commit any filthy sins again, but the word sin is what he cannot get rid of.

We should know that the cross is the place and the means God uses to deal with the "old creation." The cross does not count how many items there are in us to be dealt with. Rather, it deals with the whole "old creation" in itself. A believer cannot come to the place of the cross only to receive the grace of the substitutive death without also receiving the deliverance of co-death. Once you receive the Lord as your Savior by faith, whether you understand only the aspect of the substitutive death or you understand more, His Holy Spirit works continuously through the new life within, spontaneously

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making you hate sin and leading you to seek after the other aspect of experiencing the co-death. If you keep resisting the desire of this new life, although you will not lose the life, you will lose the enjoyment of the blessing of that life, that is, "the joy of your salvation." Likewise, if you know the power of the salvation of the cross which enables you to overcome the sinful nature, the Holy Spirit will keep leading you to go ahead and pursue the experience of overcoming the natural life. The cross will not leave its work half-done. The cross will not stop its work. Rather, it will work deeper time and time again. If the "old creation" has not been completely crucified in experience, the cross will never stop working. Its goal is to destroy completely that which is of Adam.

If a child of God has received grace and experienced deliverance from sins but does not go further and seek to overcome the natural life, and continues to live in his soul-life, he will see that his soul once again joins together with the body, leading him to go backward and causing him to again commit the sin from which he was once delivered. As with one sailing against the flow, if he does not advance, he will go backward. If the cross does not work deeper in us, then before long what has been accomplished by the cross will in effect become as though it had not been accomplished. This tells us why many believers, who have once had the experience of being delivered from sin, later experience backsliding. If the life of the old creation continues to exist in the believer, he will join together with the nature of the old creation before too long.

## **C. The Danger of Being Used by the Power of Darkness**

The book of James was written to the believers. Verses 14 and 15 of chapter three say clearly what the relationship between the soul-life and the work of Satan is: "But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which descends from above, but is earthly, soulish, demonic." We see here that there is a kind of wisdom which comes from Satan. This kind of wisdom is also from man's soul. This causes us to conclude that this kind of wisdom is the result of the work of Satan in man's soul. This is very clear. "The flesh" is the factory of the devil, but the work of Satan on the soul is no less than his work in the body. These two verses tell us that envying and strife occur due to the believer's seeking of knowledge. This is because the devil works in man's soul-life. A believer may only know that the enemy can tempt man to sin but may not know that he can also give thoughts to man. The fall of man was due to man's love of knowledge and love of wisdom. Even now Satan still uses this to cause a believer to keep his soul-life as a machine for his work.

Satan's plan is to preserve a believer's "old creation," and the more the better. If he cannot make a believer keep his sin, he will use the foolishness and unwillingness of the believer to preserve the believer's natural life. Otherwise, the armies of Hades would soon lose their jobs. If a believer would join with the Lord more in his spirit, the life of the Holy Spirit would flow more into his spirit, and the cross would daily work more deeply. Thus the believer would be delivered more from the "old creation," and the devil would have fewer places to work. We should know that all Satan's temptations, attacks, and work are in our "old creation." Our "new creation" is the life of God Himself, upon which Satan will never waste his energy working. Therefore, Satan must devise a way to make a believer keep some of the "old creation," either sin or the good natural life, through which he can continue to do his work. Therefore, the enemy troubles the believer again and again and confuses the believer, letting him, although having hated sins, still love his own life.

When a believer was still a sinner, he was "doing the desires of the flesh." This refers to sins, especially

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those which are related to the body. "And of the thoughts." This refers to the soul-life (Eph. 2:3). However, verse 2 tells us that these two are under the operation of the evil spirit. Our purpose is to let the believer understand that not only is the body the place wherein Satan works, but also the soul is what the enemy likes. What we would now emphasize is that the believer was saved to be delivered not only from his sins, but also from his natural life. Oh, may the Holy Spirit open our eyes to let us know how important this step is. If a believer is delivered from the power of sin and the soul-life, layer by layer, the work of the enemy will be a great failure.

Simply because a believer is soulish, not knowing how to guard his own mind, the evil spirit can very easily utilize man's natural wisdom to make his scheme a success. He can easily put misunderstanding and prejudice into man's mind unconsciously, causing man to have doubts toward God's truth and man's honesty. The work of the Holy Spirit within man is greatly frustrated by an evil spirit's occupation of man's own mind. Although man's intention may not be wrong, his thoughts are betrayed by his mind. These good ideas resist the work of the Holy Spirit just as the foolishness of the worldly people does. The work of an evil spirit is not only this. Sometimes an evil spirit can give a vision or other wonderful thoughts to a believer, making him think that since this is supernatural, it must be of God, thus deluding him to the uttermost. Before the soul-life is put to death, it is impossible for the mind of a believer to not be curious, exhibiting such phenomena as "wanting," "grabbing," and "searching." Thus, an evil spirit indeed has the opportunity to work.

The emotion part of the soul-life of a believer is also very likely to be pushed by the enemy into doing his work. Because a believer is eager to have a feeling of happiness and anxious to have feelings of the Holy Spirit, of the love of the Lord Jesus, and of the presence of God, the evil spirit lets him have many strange feelings, exciting him in his natural life. The evil spirit even lets the feeling organs of the body have many strange experiences. All this renders the small voice of the Holy Spirit and the delicate function of the intuition of man's spirit suppressed and unable to work. (The Lord willing, we will discuss these problems in detail in the latter part of this book.)

If a believer has not dealt with his soul-life, he will suffer great loss in the spiritual warfare. In Revelation 12:11 we see that not loving the soul-life even unto death is one of the great conditions for overcoming the devil. The heart of self-love and self-pity has to be turned over to the cross. Otherwise, one will fail before the enemy. Because a soldier of Christ often has a kind of sympathizing and caring for himself and has a deep love of his own life, he loses the victory. This kind of heart causes a believer to care for himself, to "self-examine" himself, and therefore, he will be impeded by the enemy. If the enemy can cause a believer's heart to be filled with anxiety for himself, the enemy will always be victorious.

Whenever we have a reservation about something, we show our weakness toward the enemy. The soul-life must be handed over to death. Then we will have the possibility of defeating the enemy. Satan can work through the unrestricted soul. He can also directly attack the soul which has not gone through the cross and cause the believer to fail. The soul-life is the inside help to the enemy in us. If a believer uses his own strength and refuses to be delivered from the domination of the soul-life, he will give the enemy the chance to take advantage of him. No matter how much a believer understands the truth or how zealous he is in warfare, the soul is always the dangerous spot. The worst thing is that when a believer becomes more spiritual, his soulish portion becomes much harder to detect. The less the proportion of the soul is, the harder it is to find a way to terminate it. Many times in spiritual living it is almost impossible to detect when there is a mixture of spirit with only a slight amount of soulish

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expression. Sometimes there seems to be not even the slightest difference between being soulish and being spiritual. If a believer is not watchful to resist the devil, he will fail greatly because of his soul-life.

It is outside of the believer's ordinary daily expectation that his soulish life is being affected by Satan's work and is being cheated and influenced by him. But here we must give a warning that in God's ordination we should reject all things we have received from Adam—our life and our nature. It is always dangerous to not be obedient to God.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE CROSS AND THE SOUL**

#### **THE CALLING OF THE CROSS**

In the four Gospels the Lord Jesus at least four times called His disciples to renounce their soul-life, to put it to death, to follow Him. The Lord knew that renouncing the soul-life is an absolutely indispensable requirement if man is to follow Him, to attain to perfect status, to be like Him in serving men, and to do the will of God. Although the Lord Jesus spoke about the soul-life in all these four callings, He had a special emphasis in each. We know that the soul-life actually has various manifestations. Therefore, the Lord spoke about the soul-life with diverse emphases. Every disciple of the Lord must pay attention to the Lord's own words. The Lord's calling is that man should hand his soul-life over to the cross.

#### **THE CROSS AND THE AFFECTION OF THE SOUL**

In Matthew 10:38 and 39 the Lord Jesus said, "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his soul-life shall lose it, and he who loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it."

These verses call us to lose our soul-life for the Lord's sake, to hand this life over to the cross to be dealt with. Prior to these verses, the Lord Jesus spoke of how a man's foes are those of his own household, and how a son, for the Lord's sake, is estranged from his father, the daughter from her mother, and the daughter-in-law from her mother-in-law. Because God's will is at variance with the intention of our household, we must for the Lord's sake become estranged from our dearest ones. This is a cross. This is a crucifixion. According to our soul-life, we love those whom we love. We like to obey them, and we are willing to act according to their desire. When our loved ones are happy, are not our hearts happy with them? But here the Lord Jesus called us not to rebel against Him for the sake of loving man. When God's will conflicts with man's wish, although that person is the one whom we love the most and who loves us the most, and although ordinarily we would feel painful and be most reluctant to break his heart, for the Lord's sake we should take up the cross to put our affections to death.

This kind of calling of the Lord Jesus is to rid us of our natural affection. Thus, He said in verse 37, "He who loves father or mother above Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter above Me is not worthy of Me."

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In Luke 14:26 and 27 it is written: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and moreover, even his own soul-life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." Matthew shows the believer the choice he should make concerning his own affection: he should love the Lord more than his household. Luke shows the attitude the believer should hold toward the love originating from his own soul-life: he should hate it. Actually, this means that the believer should not have love toward others simply because they are the ones he would naturally love. It is forbidden that I love others only because they are the ones I naturally love. Even those as dear as parents, brothers, wife, and children are all included in this forbidden list. This kind of natural love is out of the soul-life. This kind of natural love tends to cause one to be "glued" to others, to hold fast to those whom he loves, as well as to demand their love. The Lord considers this soul-life as something that should be delivered to death. Although we cannot see the Lord now and our hearts still prefer to follow our loved ones and our life demands that we have some loved ones, the Lord desires that we have a loving heart toward Him whom we have not seen. He wants us to reject the love which comes out of our nature. The Lord Jesus wants to rid us of all our direct love toward men. He does not want us to use our own love to love men. He desires us to love men not according to the natural liking in our soul. Such love of the natural man should be stopped. Now if we love others again, it is because we have a new relationship in the Lord. It is only because of the Lord that we love. It is not because of our own love for others that we love. We should, for the Lord's sake, receive from Him His love to love others. In short, our love towards others should be under the regulation of the Lord. If the Lord wants us to, we should love even our enemies. If the Lord does not want us to, we should not love even the dearest one in our household. The Lord does not want our hearts to be attached anywhere; He wants us to serve Him freely.

If this is to be the case, the soul-life must be rejected. This is a cross. Obedience to Christ and disregard of human sentiment cause the believer's natural love to feel grief and pain. Therefore, such grief and pain become the believer's practical cross, enabling him through such a willingness to deny the self, to lose the soul-life related to the activity in the realm of love. Oftentimes, to forsake one's loved one is heart-breaking and soul-hurting. Many tears and sighings and much unspeakable sadness are produced because of the loss of a loved one. All these bring sufferings to our life. How unwilling is our soul to deny our loved ones for the Lord's sake! But it is thus by putting the soul to death—being willing to die—that the believers are able to break away from the soul's power. Such a loss of the soul-life's natural love on the cross enables the soul-life to let the Holy Spirit pour God's love into its heart before God, thus causing all the soul's love to be through God and in God.

Here we need to take note that this soul-life, humanly speaking, is legitimate and natural to possess; it is not filthy like sins. Is not the love that has been mentioned commonly shared by all men? Is it not legitimate to have the affection which loves one's household? However, the Lord's calling is for us to overcome the natural and, for God's sake, to renounce even man's legitimate right and be blended with God. God wants us to love Him more than Abraham loved Isaac. Although the soul-life was given to man by the Lord of creation, God desires that men (if willing) not live according to this life. The worldly man cannot apprehend God's desire. But when a believer advances gradually and loses himself in God's life, he will know God's desire. Who can understand that God, having given Isaac to Abraham, also wanted him to give up Isaac? But those who know the heart of God do not want to stop at God's natural gifts; rather, they desire to rest in the God who gives the gift. God's purpose is that we would be attached only to Him, not to any persons, things, or matters—although these persons, things, or matters may have been given by God Himself.

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Christians are very willing to leave the Ur of Chaldea, but they seldom see the importance of offering on Mount Moriah what God has given. This is one of the deeper lessons of faith. This is a lesson of entering into the life of God and being united with God. What God wants from His children is that they should forsake all and become His completely. They must not only remove those things which they themselves realize and consider to be harmful, but they must also deliver their most legitimate human living, such as affection, to the cross and follow the direction of the Holy Spirit.

What our Lord wants is very meaningful because man's affection is a function which is very difficult to control. Unless the believer hands over this affection to the cross and is willing to lose it in death, he will be greatly hindered in the spiritual life. Since human affairs often change, human affection is also influenced. When the faculty of affection is stimulated, the whole being of the believer very easily loses its spiritual normality. A believer who is soulish in this part will often be disturbed and lose the peace in his spirit. Sorrow, grief, lament, and tears are the usual results of affection. If the Lord cannot have the first place in the matter of affection, it is hard for Him to take charge in other things. This is a test of spirituality as well as a measure of its degree. Therefore, we should hate our own life and not let it have any opportunity for free activity in exercising human love. The Lord's demand and our natural intention are completely opposite. What we love we must now hate. Not only must we hate what we love, but we must also hate that faculty from which the love issues, that is, our soul-life. This then is the way toward spirituality. If we truly take up the cross in such a way, it will prevent the soulish affection from controlling and influencing the spirit and will enable us to love others by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is precisely how the Lord Jesus treated His family when He was on the earth.

### **THE CROSS AND THE "SELF" OF THE SOUL**

In Matthew 16:24-25 the Lord Jesus also spoke about the relationship of the soul-life and the cross: "Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it." In these verses, our Lord again called His disciples to take up the cross, to be willing to put the soul-life to death so that they might lose their soul-life. What is spoken of here and what was spoken of previously in Matthew 10 are not the same. The part of the soul-life emphasized in Matthew 10 is the affection. The part of the soul-life emphasized here in chapter sixteen is man's "self." If we read the foregoing passage, we will realize that at this time the Lord Jesus told His disciples what kind of suffering He would bear on the cross. Then Peter, because of his desperate love toward the Lord, said, "God be merciful to You, Lord!" Because Peter was setting his mind on the things of man, he was reluctant to see his Master bear any suffering of the cross in the flesh. He did not understand that man ought to completely set his mind on the things of God. Even if it is the suffering of the death of the cross, he still ought to set his mind on the things of God. He did not know that the love of God's will should surpass the love of self. It is as if he were thinking, "You, Lord, are going to the cross to suffer in such a way, although You are doing the will of God, although You are accomplishing the purpose of God, and although You are acting according to the plan of God. But what is this doing to You Yourself? Do You not consider the suffering You will bear because of doing the will of God? Lord, pity Your own self!"

But the Lord indicated to him that such a way of pitying oneself comes from Satan. Then He continued to speak to His disciples as if to say, "Not only will I go to the cross, but those who want to follow Me and be My disciples must also go to the cross. Whatever My path may be, it should also be your path.

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You should not misunderstand that I am the only one who ought to do the will of God, but you, My disciples, also ought to do the will of God as I do. Just as I do not care for Myself, as even at the cross I am still doing the will of God unconditionally, you also should not care for your soul-life but be willing to lose it to do what God wants you to do." Peter asked the Lord why He would not be "merciful" to Himself, but the Lord's reply was that one should "deny himself."

There is a price to pay for doing the will of God. The flesh cannot help trembling concerning this. When the soul-life deeply rules within us, we simply cannot take the will of God as His commandment. This is so because the soul-life wants to follow the intention of its own self but does not want to obey the will of God. When we see that God is calling us to the cross to deny our self, to sacrifice, and to lose all things for His sake, unconsciously our soul-life produces a self-pitying heart. Our soul-life often makes us unwilling to pay the price to obey God. Therefore, every time we are willing to choose the narrow way of the cross to suffer for Christ's sake, the soul-life suffers loss. It is only through this way that we lose our soul-life. By this alone can we gain the spiritual life of Christ to rule completely and purely within us, enabling us to do works that are well-pleasing to God for the sake of the world's benefit.

If we pay attention to the situation of the foregoing passage, we will understand the wickedness of the work of the soul-life. Peter spoke this word shortly after he had received the revelation of God, thereby understanding the mystery which man cannot understand. God the Father had personally revealed to him that the lowly Jesus whom the disciples followed was the very Christ of the living God. However, it was also after his receiving of this revelation that he was immediately controlled by the soul-life to advise his Master that He should pity Himself. Therefore, we should know that spiritual revelation or wonderful knowledge cannot insure that we will not be controlled by the soul. On the contrary, the soul-life of those with higher knowledge and more experiences might be more hidden than others and more difficult to eliminate. Without applying the cross to deal with the soul-life, the soul-life will always be preserved in man without being lost.

Herein we see the utter uselessness of the soul-life. At this particular time, Peter's soul-life was aroused not for himself but for the Lord Jesus. He loved the Lord, he pitied the Lord, and he desired that the Lord be happy. He really desired that suffering not come upon the Lord. His heart was not bad, and his intention was very good, but this was merely his "human affection" which issued out of his soul-life. The Lord does not want any caring sympathy from the soul. The soul-life is not allowed even in loving the Lord! Here we see that there is a possibility of being soulish in serving, adoring, and expressing our love toward the Lord. Here we also see that the soul-life is not acceptable even in the matter of loving the Lord and sympathizing with the Lord. The Lord Jesus Himself served God by forsaking His soul. Similarly, therefore, He does not want man to serve Him by his soul. The Lord's call for His disciples to put the soul-life to death is not only because the soul-life can love men but also because it is capable of adoring the Lord. What the Lord asks is not how well the task is done, but from where the doing comes.

Although such an expression of Peter's love was for the Lord, such love for the Lord was a manifestation of how Peter himself was. He adored the body of the Lord Jesus more than the will of God and advised the Lord to care for Himself. This was a manifestation of Peter's own self. Therefore, the Lord taught in such a way. Truly the soul-life tends to be independent, serving God according to what it considers to be good but not walking according to the will of God. Doing the will of God is the loss of the soul. Every time God's will is accomplished, the intention of the soul is also broken. Every

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breaking of the intention of the soul is a practical application of the dealing of the cross to the soul-life.

The Lord Jesus called the disciples to forsake the soul-life because Peter spoke according to his soul. But the Lord also considered that the words spoken by Peter were from Satan. Thus, we see how Satan uses man's soul-life. If at any time this life is not put to death, Satan has a tool for his work. At this time Peter spoke this word because of his love for the Lord, but Satan was making use of him. At this time Peter prayed to the Lord and begged the Lord to pity Himself, but Satan had inspired him. It is a fact that Satan can tell man to love the Lord and can tell man to pray. He is not afraid for man to pray and love the Lord, but he is afraid that man would not use his own soul-life to love the Lord and pray. If the soul-life still remains, Satan can still expand his enterprise. Oh, may God make us understand the danger of this life! Believers should not consider that they are spiritual just because they now love the Lord and long for the heavenly things. The soul-life has to be put to death. Otherwise, God's will cannot be accomplished; instead, the soul-life will be utilized by Satan.

Self-pity, self-love, fear of suffering, and shrinking from the cross, are manifestations of the soul-life. The greatest goal of the soul-life is to preserve its own existence. It is very unwilling to suffer any loss. Therefore, the Lord's calling is that we should deny the self and take up our own cross, thereby causing us to lose our soul-life. Whenever a cross is placed before us, it is to call us to lose our self. We should have a heart disregarding our self, and through the power of God we should give up our life for others' sake. The Lord says that this cross is ours because this is what we have received from God individually. In order to do the will of God, God is calling us to bear the cross which we should bear. This cross is ours and is specifically given to us by God. But it is also linked to the cross of Christ because when we are willing to take up our own cross through the Spirit of the cross of Christ, the strength of the cross of Christ enters our being and enables us to lose our soul-life. Every time we bear the cross, we lose our soul-life. Every time we bypass the cross, we nourish and preserve our soul-life.

We should note carefully that what the Lord Jesus says here is not something which can be accomplished once for all by making a great effort. In Luke 9:23 the word "daily" is added to the phrase "take up his cross." Thus, this kind of cross is continuous and unceasing. With respect to our death to sin, we know that this cross is already a fact, an already accomplished fact that merely requires our recognition and reception. But with respect to the loss of our soul-life, this cross is another matter. This is not an accomplished matter but one that requires daily practice and daily experience. This does not mean that we never lose our soul-life or that we gradually lose it; rather, it means that the relation of the cross to the soul-life is different from the relation of the cross to sin. The death to sin was accomplished by Christ for us; when He died, we all died with Him. But the loss of the soul-life is not an already accomplished fact. Rather, it requires that we daily bear our own cross through the power of the Lord's cross, determining to deny the self until it is lost.

The loss of the soul-life is not a matter that can be accomplished either once for all by making a great effort or within a short period of time. With respect to our death to sin, once we are standing on the position of the cross (Rom. 6:6), we can have an immediate deliverance from sin, enabling us not to be oppressed by its power and no longer to be its slave. Complete victory can be gained in an instant. The loss of the natural life, however, is a step by step process. When the Word of God (Heb. 4:12) penetrates deeper and deeper, the working of the cross will also be deeper, and the Holy Spirit will cause the spiritual life to grow more, making it more united with the Lord. A believer cannot deny the soul-life which is unknown to him. He can only deny that part of the self-life which is known to him. The revelation of God's Word must increase; then the work of the cross can be deeper. Therefore, this

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cross is for us to bear "daily." The more there is the understanding of the will of God and the more there is the knowing of our self, the more there will be the need of the working of the cross.

### **THE CROSS AND THE SOUL'S LOVE OF THE WORLD**

In Luke 17:32-33 our Lord has a similar word, but what is pointed out there is concerning the things of the world: "Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his soul-life will lose it, and whoever loses it will preserve it alive." Here the Lord speaks again that we must lose the soul-life, but what the Lord speaks here especially stresses the believers' reluctance to lose their belongings. The Lord told us to remember Lot's wife because she even remembered her belongings while she was in danger. She did not turn back and walk toward Sodom; she did not backtrack even an inch. The only thing she did was cast a look behind. But how much is revealed in this looking back! It speaks forth a very long story in her heart.

A believer can leave the world and lose all things outwardly, but within him he still can have a heart loving all those things he lost for the Lord's sake. This then is the working of the soul-life. With a believer who is consecrated to the Lord, there is no need for him to regress and go back again to the path of the world. He also does not need to labor to gain back what he has forsaken for the Lord. The unwillingness of the heart to part with the world is sufficient to show that he has not clearly seen the position of the world in relation to the cross. There is no need for the working of the soul-life to cause man to turn back and walk toward the world. It only needs to cause the believer, secretly within his heart, to be reluctant to give up the things which he is going to abandon or which he has already abandoned.

When the soul-life really reaches the point that it is lost, none of the things of the world can truly touch the believer's heart. The soul-life in fact belongs to the world; thus, it is reluctant to give up the things of the world. Only when a believer is really willing to put the soul-life to death will he be able to follow unflinchingly the teaching of the Lord Jesus on the mount. In the teaching on the mount, we do not see that the Lord clearly mentioned the function of the cross. However, we know that unless a believer really has the experience of dying with the Lord—not only being dead to sin but also denying the soul-life based on being "already dead"—he will have to devise ways to follow the teaching of the Lord on the mount. If the cross has not done a deep work in a believer's soul-life, even though he can walk outwardly according to the teaching on the mount, his inward heart and his outward walk are not one. A believer who has lost his soul-life can spontaneously and without any pretense give away his cloak when he is sued for his tunic. A believer who has lost his soul in death is a believer who is cut off from all the worldly things.

The condition for gaining the spiritual life is that we should have some loss; then we will have some gain. In this world, it is not by how much we have gained that we are counted rich, for actually, the richer we are, the more we lose. We should not use "gain" to measure our life; we should use "loss" to measure it. How much wine has been poured out is our real measurement. It is not how much we have retained. The one who has lost the most is the one who has the most with which to supply others. The power of love can be seen by the sacrifice of love. If our hearts have not been cut off from loving the worldly belongings, our soul-life has not yet been under the working of the cross.

Hebrews 10:34 says that certain believers were robbed of their family possessions, but this they "accepted with joy." This is the issue of the work of the cross. The attitude of the saints toward their

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possessions is an indication of whether the soul-life is preserved or is already willing to be put to death.

If we really want a pure and spiritual living, we have to let God work on our heart, in order to be truly cut off from everything worldly and no longer have the intention of Lot's wife. Not loving worldly belongings in such a way is a condition for gaining the complete spiritual life in Christ. When the Holy Spirit reveals the heavenly reality and the complete spiritual life to a saint, he will despise all the worldly things because the one cannot be compared with the other. The experience of the apostle Paul in Philippians 3 is precisely like this. In the beginning he "counted as loss" all things; later he truly "suffered the loss of all things" that he might gain Christ. Eventually, he told us that the issue of this is to know the power of Christ's resurrection. This is a complete spiritual life. We often do not know how much power our soul-life has. When we are tested in the material things, we see where our soul-life is. It often seems that the loss of possessions requires more of the grace of God than the loss of life! The worldly things are really the material for testing the preservation or loss of the soul-life.

Those children of God who pay too much attention to their drinking, eating, and daily home life should let the cross do a deeper work in them so that their spirits will not be surrounded and influenced by their souls. Thus, their spirits will be separated from all things worldly and will be enabled to live in God without any hindrances. Whoever cares for the things of the world always does so because his soul-life has not been lost and has not passed through the working of the cross.

### **THE CROSS AND SOUL POWER**

In John 12:24-25 the Lord Jesus again talked about the problem of the soul-life: "Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life." Later on, He explained the meaning of these two verses, saying, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself. But He said this signifying by what kind of death He was about to die." This chapter of the Bible records the most successful time of the Lord Jesus' whole life. Lazarus had resurrected, and because of Lazarus, many Jews believed in the Lord. Besides this, even the Greeks wanted to see Him. At this time He entered Jerusalem to be welcomed by men. According to man's viewpoint, it seemed that the cross was unnecessary and that the Lord could draw all men to Himself without going to the cross. However, He knew that there was no other way that man could be saved except by the cross. Although His work was very prosperous outwardly, He knew that if He did not die, He could not give life to man. If He died, He would then draw all men to Himself and really give life to them.

Here the Lord clearly stated the function of the cross. He considered His own self as a grain of wheat. If a grain of wheat does not fall into the ground and die, no matter what, it is still one grain. If the Lord would be crucified on the cross and die, He would then give life to many men. Here the Lord pointed out that the condition of all fruit-bearing is death. Without death there is no fruit. There is no other way of bearing fruit except through death.

Our goal, however, is not to stop at an examination of how the Lord Jesus Himself was. What we especially want to pay attention to is how this relates to our soul-life. The Lord Jesus related the grain of wheat to Himself in verse 24, but in verse 25 He indicated that such a death as His and such fruit-bearing as His should not apply only to Himself. He indicated that whoever is His disciple should walk according to His footsteps. He pointed out what the meaning of the grain of wheat is in relation to

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Christians. He considered the grain as representing their soul-life. If a grain of wheat does not die, it cannot bear fruit. Accordingly, if the soul-life is not lost in death, neither can it bear fruit. What the Lord Jesus stressed here is the matter of the fruit-bearing work. Although a believer's soul-life is very powerful, this power cannot produce a work of bearing fruit. All talents, gifts, knowledge, wisdom, and power that issue from the soul-life are unable to cause the believers to produce many grains. Just as the Lord Jesus had to die in order that He could bear fruit, so also the believers must die that they may be able to bear fruit. The Lord indicated that although the power of the soul-life is good, it is useless in God's fruit-bearing work.

When the believers are doing the Lord's work, the greatest danger is that they would be self-reliant and use all the power of their soul-life: their ability, gifts, knowledge, persuasive power, eloquence, and cleverness. In the experience of many spiritual believers, the soul-life is very active in doing work for the Lord unless they concentrate all their attention to put the soul to death. On the one hand, they must ask the Lord not to allow the soul-life to have any opportunity of intruding, and on the other hand, they must watch not to let the soul-life have any function. Thus, how could those who are unwilling to deny the soul-life and watch and pray in such a way guard themselves from being intruded by the soul-life? All things belonging to the soul should be put to death. We should be willing not to depend on them at all. We should be willing to let God lead us through the darkness of death without any dependence, without any feeling, without any seeing, without any understanding, but in calmness, trusting the working of God Himself. Then God will cause us to gain a more glorious soul-life on the side of resurrection. "He who hates his soul- life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life." The soul-life is not lost; rather, it is allowed to pass through death. When we die and can neither see nor feel anything, God—not ourselves—will be able to use the soul-life to impart His life to us. If the soul-life is not lost in death, the believer will suffer the greatest loss. If the soul-life is lost, it will be kept unto eternal life and always be used by God.

Here we must not misunderstand, thinking that we should no longer use our mind and ability. This verse of the Bible explains clearly: "He who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life." Apparently, we have lost our soul, but actually we keep it unto eternal life. To put the soul to death is not to destroy or give up the function of the different parts of the soul, just as "that the body of sin might be annulled" (Rom. 6:6) is not to destroy the hands, feet, ears, and eyes of the human body. We are told to "present our...members as weapons of righteousness to God" (v. 13) after destroying the body of sin. Likewise, putting the soul-life to death and taking up the cross to follow the Lord does not mean that henceforth we become like wood and stone, without sensation, without thought, and without idea, giving up the use of all the faculties of the soul-life. The members of the body and the function of the soul still exist and still are completely used, except that they are being renewed, strengthened, and directed by the Holy Spirit. The question is whether the faculties of our soul are being strengthened and directed by the soul-life or by the Holy Spirit through the human spirit. The faculties still exist, except that the life directing them and animating them is put to death. Thus, the Holy Spirit, through the transcendent life of God, is afforded the opportunity to be the life of these faculties.

Each faculty of our soul, although passing through loss in death, still exists. Putting the soul-life to death does not mean that henceforth our mind, emotion, and will are completely abolished and become emptiness. We can clearly read in the Bible about God's thought, will, joy, satisfaction, love, and gladness. Even with the Lord Jesus, the Bible often says that He "loved," "exulted," "grieved," and also "wept." When He was in the garden of Gethsemane, He "offered up both petitions and supplications with strong crying and tears" (Heb. 5:7). Therefore, the faculties of the soul do not vanish, nor does the

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believer become a sensationless, unsympathetic, and icy, cold person. Man's soul is man's own self, man's personality, and all the faculties of his own life. If these do not receive vitality from the life of the Spirit who is from above, they must receive the power of their living from man's natural soul-life. The soul in the sense of the faculty of the soul still exists; but the soul in the sense of the life of the soul must be denied completely. All it has must be put to death. Only this can enable the Holy Spirit alone to use each faculty of the soul without any interference of the natural life.

Here we see the resurrection life. If man has not gained the transcendent life of God, once he is lost in death he is dead and cannot resurrect. The Lord Jesus could die and resurrect because in Him there is God's uncreated life. This life can pass through death, not be destroyed, and be manifested again in the freshness and glory of resurrection. The Lord Jesus poured out His soul unto death and gave His spirit into God's hand. Since His spirit had God's own life, He could resurrect. His death only caused Him to be free from the soul-life and caused His life, the life of God's Spirit, to be manifested greater and brighter. If a man without God's life is dead, although his spirit remains forever, he cannot resurrect in eternal life as the Lord did.

It is hard for men to understand that God, having given His life to us, still wants us to have an experiential death with the Lord, thereby making His own life in us pass through death and resurrect again. Nevertheless, this is the law of God's life. Because we have the life of God, we can pass through death and remain living. Such a death causes us to lose our soul-life, thus enabling us to be in the resurrected eternal life where we gain God's life more richly and more gloriously.

God's goal is to have His life within us lead our soul-life through death so that when His life resurrects, it will cause the soul-life to be resurrected with Him and bear fruit unto eternity. This is the highest and deepest lesson of the spiritual life. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal to us how indispensable resurrection is and thereby cause us to know how indispensable death is also. May the Spirit of revelation make us know that if we do not hate our own life and put it to death, our spiritual life will suffer much loss and be unable to bear fruit. When God's life within us and our soul-life pass through death and resurrect together, we have the possibility of bearing fruit that remains unto eternal life.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THE SPIRITUAL BELIEVER AND THE SOUL**

#### **THE DIVIDING OF THE SPIRIT AND THE SOUL**

The reason we have made the effort to speak so much on the distinction between the spirit and the soul and their activities is to bring us to this point. What a God-seeking believer should fear the most is the activity of the soul beyond the limitation set up by God. The soul has been in control for a long time. Even when one is willing to consecrate himself to God, he still may hold the thought that it is his work now and that he has to complete what he is consecrating in order to please God. Many believers do not know how deeply the cross should work, working even to the extent that the believer should reject his ability to make his own living. Many believers do not see the reality of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Neither do they know how great an authority He should have, to the extent that the mind, will, and feelings of the whole being should be under His subjection until there is no self-reliance at all. Unless it is so, the Holy Spirit cannot do the work He wants to do. The greatest temptation a believer

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who is diligently seeking God faces, is that of using his own ability to will and do God's work and not humbly waiting and relying on the Holy Spirit to move.

The calling of the cross of the Lord Jesus is for us to hate our soul-life so that we find the opportunity to lose it and not preserve it. The Lord's intention is that the self must and should be sacrificed and offered up completely so that the Holy Spirit may work. All opinion, work, and thinking ability in the soul-life must be willing to be put to death so that we can regain His true life by the life and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Lord spoke of the matter of our hating or loving our soul-life. The soul is self-loving. If we do not from our heart truly hate our natural life, we cannot have a real living in the Holy Spirit. If a believer has not seen this, he will not be fearful of his self and his own intelligence and will not completely rely on, wait upon, and look to the Holy Spirit. These are the primary requirements for the spiritual life.

The war between the soul and the spirit goes on secretly and without ceasing inside the believer. The soul, on behalf of the self, wants to be the head and act by itself. The spirit, on behalf of God, wants to gain all and be the master with full authority. In this situation, if the spirit has not gained the victory, the soul takes the lead in everything. If a believer thus allows himself to be the master and expects the Holy Spirit to be his help and bless his work, he will unavoidably lose the spiritual fruit. If we do not reject our self and lose our soul-life, but instead follow its idea, opinion, and suggestion, and if we do not constantly deny its right and unconditionally and unreservedly put it in the ashes, without longing for what we have lost, we cannot expect to have a spiritual life and work that pleases God. Unless we willingly deliver the power, the eagerness, the liveliness, the running, etc., of the soul-life to the cross and maintain a steady attitude of hating the soul-life, it will seize the chance to rise up. The reason we have so many failures in our spiritual life is that the aspect of the soul has not been dealt with thoroughly, while we still hope to overcome it by gaining more of the Holy Spirit and power. If the soul-life is not lost through death but is allowed to be mixed with the spirit, the believers will continue to fail just as before. If our life does not completely manifest the power of the Holy Spirit of God, before long we will have more failures due to the wisdom and opinions of man.

This natural soul-life of ours is an obstacle to our spirit-life. It will never be satisfied with God alone; it always wants to add something other than God. Thus, it never has a moment of peace. Before the believer's soul-life has been dealt with, it lives on excitement and feelings. These, after all, are very changeable, so the believer's living also is changed accordingly. This explains why the believer's living is like waves, always going up and down. When the believer allows his spiritual experiences to be mixed with his soul-life, his experience often becomes unstable so that he is not qualified to be a leading one. This soul-life which has not been lost is constantly luring man to leave the center of his spirit. Sometimes it is the effect of emotion that greatly hurts the freedom and consciousness of the spirit. Joy and grief cause the believer to lose his self-control and to feel that he has been unrestrained and has had a hard time constraining himself. Sometimes it is the extra activities of the mind that cause the quiet spiritual life to be affected and become disorderly. No doubt it is good to desire spiritual knowledge. However, if it goes outside the spiritual measure, what is gained is only letters and not the spirit. This is why many workers, although they are preaching the most wonderful truth, are filled with coldness and deadness. Many believers who seek after a spiritual life have a common experience, the kind of experience that makes them groan: their soul and their spirit are not in unison. This means that the mind, will, and emotion of the soul oftentimes rebel against the spirit by not obeying the command of the spirit. They often want to act alone apart from the spirit, contradicting the desire of the spirit. What is usually damaged by this kind of living is the spirit-life.

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Therefore the teaching in Hebrews 4:12 is very important because it is precisely here that the Holy Spirit teaches us how to divide the soul from the spirit in our experience. The dividing of the soul from the spirit is not merely a doctrine; the believer must have and can have such an experience in life. What is the meaning of the dividing of the soul from the spirit? It is simply that, first, God by His Word and through His indwelling Spirit can differentiate experientially the function and expression of the soul from that of the spirit, teaching the believer to know what is the move of the spirit and what is the move of the soul. Second, the willingness of a believer to cooperate causes him experientially to have a pure spiritual life without being affected by the soul. In Hebrews 4, the Holy Spirit tells us of the function of the Lord Jesus as a High Priest toward the believers. Verse 12 says, "For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Verse 13 continues: "And there is no creature that is not manifest before Him, but all things are naked and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we are to give our account." Here the Bible speaks of how the Lord Jesus is carrying out His work as the High Priest for the spirit and soul of the believers. The Holy Spirit here likens the believer to a sacrifice on the altar. During the Old Testament times, when people offered up sacrifices, the sacrifice was tied on the altar, killed by the priest with a sharp knife, and opened in half with the knife so that the joints and marrow were pierced and opened. All the insides that were hidden, which could not be seen or known before, were opened up and laid bare without concealment. After it was opened up, the priest would then burn the sacrifice with fire as an offering to God. The Holy Spirit uses this picture to illustrate the work of the Lord Jesus in the Christians and the experience gained in the Lord by the Christians. As the sacrifice was opened with the knife by the priest so that the joints and marrow were all laid bare, clearly separated in half, thus it will also be for the believers now. With the word of God, their soul is divided from their spirit by their High Priest, the Lord Jesus, so that the soul no longer affects the spirit and the spirit no longer is controlled by the soul. Thus, each has its own place, and one can distinguish what is from the soul and what is from the spirit without any confusion or mixture.

In creation, the first step of the word of God was to separate the light from the dark. Likewise, the word of God now works as a sharp sword inside of us through the Holy Spirit to distinguish the spirit from the soul, so that the dwelling place of the most noble God can be completely separated from base feelings, and we may know how much our soul should submit to the One who is above. This causes us to know how the spirit is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God and how the soul with all its power is to move not by itself, but according to the will of the Holy Spirit manifested through the human spirit.

In the past the priests used knives to cut open the sacrifices. Today's High Priest employs the word of God to divide the soul from the spirit of the believer. The knife of the priest of old was very sharp. It could cut open the sacrifice into two halves. It could even pierce and divide the joints and marrow, parts which are so solidly jointed together. Now the word of God used by the Lord Jesus is sharper than the two-edged sword. Thus, it can clearly divide the most intimate parts in man, the soul and the spirit.

The word of God is "living"—having the living power; "operative"—capable of doing work; and "sharper than any two-edged sword"—able to pierce into the spirit. The word of God can pierce deeper than the soul, even to the innermost part, the spirit. Thus, the believers are led into what is much deeper than the feeling, into the eternal spirit-life. If a believer wants to have a steady life in God, he needs to understand what is the meaning of piercing into the spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can teach the believers what the soul-life is and what the spirit-life is. When the believer can distinguish the two in experience

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and know their value, he leaves that superficial and shallow life of emotion behind and comes to gain the deep, solid, spiritual one. Only then can the believer have rest. The soul-life will never give rest to people. Nevertheless, this has to be realized from experience. Otherwise, the understanding in the mind only makes the believers more soulish.

We should pay special attention to the words "piercing" and "dividing." The word of God pierces (or penetrates) into the soul and the spirit so that they become divided. When the Lord Jesus was crucified, His hands, His feet, and His side were pierced. Are we willing to let the cross work in our soul and spirit? The soul of Mary was pierced (Luke 2:35). Although her "son" was given by God, she had to give Him up and give up all her right and demand for a son. She had to reject every natural love. She had to rid herself of all the attachments in the soul. This is the kind of work that the word of God should do in us.

The dividing of soul and spirit is not only the separating of soul and spirit, but the dividing of the soul itself. The dividing of the soul is very meaningful. If the word of life is to reach to our spirit, it has to divide the soul first, for the spirit is surrounded by the soul. The word of the cross pierces and divides the soul and opens the way for the life of God to get into the life of the spirit and free the spirit from the bondage of the soul. The soul-life, having the imprint of the cross, will then keep its submissive position to the spirit. If the soul is not the "thoroughfare" for the spirit, it becomes fetters to the spirit. The soul and the spirit never agree on anything. If the spirit has not attained the supreme position, they will often war against each other. The spirit strives to gain freedom and authority, but the strong soul-life tries its best to suppress it. However, when the soul-life has been worked upon by the cross, the spirit is set free. If the believer does not see the harm done by the soul in not being one with the spirit or in not being willing to be rid of the pleasure of living by feeling, he cannot progress easily. As long as the encirclement of the soul is not removed, the life of the spirit cannot be free.

After we carefully read the teaching in this passage of the Bible, we know that the spirit is separated from the soul in a believer by means of two things: (1) the cross, and (2) the word of God. The sacrifice has to be laid upon the altar; then the priest can use the knife to divide the sacrifice into two halves. We know that the altar in the Old Testament is just the cross in the New Testament. Therefore, if the believers are not willing to come to the foundation of the cross and be put to death, they cannot expect their High Priest to divide their soul and spirit with the sharp sword of God, that is, the word of God. Laying on the altar comes first, then the dividing by the knife. Therefore, the believers have to come to the place of the cross. Only then can they expect the Lord Jesus to fulfill His duty as the High Priest, to divide the soul and spirit of the believers with His word. Therefore, the believers who desire to gain the experience of the dividing of soul and spirit should hear the voice of the Lord calling them to Golgotha to lay themselves on the altar without any reluctance and trust their High Priest to cut open and divide their soul and spirit with His sharp sword. The believers' place today, as those offering a well-accepted offering to God, is on the altar. Then it is the job of the Priest to use the knife to divide. Believers should fulfill the condition of their side and trust the rest of the experience to the hands of their faithful High Priest. In due time He will surely let them have a complete spiritual experience.

We have seen how the Lord is calling us to come to the cross and put our soul-life to death. If we do not put ourselves on the altar, our High Priest has no way to divide our soul and spirit with His sharp knife. We should be willing to let the cross work; then we can have our High Priest work for us. We should follow the example of our Lord Jesus. When He died, He poured out His soul-life unto death (Isa. 53:12), yet He gave His spirit to God (Luke 23:46). What He did then is what we should do now.

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The soul-life has to die. If we truly pour out our soul-life and also commit our spirit to God, we shall see before long that God will make known to us what is the power of resurrection. In the glory of resurrection there is the complete spiritual life.

## **THE WAY TO PRACTICE**

As we have said before, the High Priest is working because we have accepted the cross. Now we want to talk about how, in practice, the Lord Jesus divides our soul and spirit.

### **Knowing the Need to Have the Soul and Spirit Divided**

If there is no such knowledge, there will be no such demand. The believer must ask the Lord to show him the detestableness of a life of the spirit and soul mixed together and must know that in God there is a life that is both higher and deeper, completely of the spirit, and not affected by the soul. He should know that a spirit-soul mixed life is a life of loss.

### **Wanting to Be Divided**

The believer should not only know but also truly desire to have this mixed spirit-soul divided; there should be a desperate desire in the heart to have this dividing. This is because all problems are now with the will of man. If the believer is not willing and does not want the dividing of his spirit and soul, but rather prefers to enjoy what he himself sees as good, God will respect the character of man and will never force him.

### **Surrendering Wholly**

If a believer is willing to gain the experience of the dividing of spirit and soul, he should put himself wholly on the altar of the cross. He should be completely willing in his heart to accept the effect of all the work of the cross, willing to follow the Lord's death until his spirit and soul have been divided experientially. Before he has the experience of this dividing, he should continually put his will on the side of God, livingly and actively choosing the dividing. He should maintain the attitude that until the dividing work is done, he does not want the High Priest to stop working.

### **Standing on Romans 6:11**

Believers must be careful not to fall into sins and trespasses while seeking the experience of the dividing of spirit and soul. The basis of the dividing of the spirit and soul is that one has died to sin. Therefore, the believer should daily take the attitude of Romans 6:11, reckoning that he is truly dead to sin, and wholeheartedly keep this attitude in his will: "Do not let sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (v. 12). Only by this can he have the possibility of not letting the soul-life sin again through the mortal body.

### **Praying and Reading the Word**

The believer should search the Bible by prayer and meditation. He should let the word of God deeply pierce him so that his soul-life can have the cleansing of the word of God, for if the believer truly can walk according to the word of God, his soul-life surely will not be active. This is the meaning of the word in 1 Peter 1:22: "Since you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth."

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## **Bearing the Cross Daily**

If the Lord is to divide our spirit and soul, He will, according to the need of circumstances, allow us to bear the cross. If the believer daily bears the cross, refuses the self, not being directed by the flesh for one moment, and has the Holy Spirit of God constantly reveal the activities of the soul in his daily living, this is a living of the spirit. If a believer faithfully submits himself, the Lord will secretly divide the soul and spirit of the believer so that he can have a pure and spiritual living.

## **Walking by the Spirit**

Walking by the Spirit is a condition that safeguards us and is also the condition in which to have our spirit and soul completely divided. Believers should in all things seek to walk by the spirit, distinguish what is from the spirit and what is from the soul, and decide absolutely to follow everything that is from the spirit and refuse that which is from the soul. One should learn to know all the work of his own spirit and follow it.

These are all conditions which believers should fulfill on their part. The Holy Spirit needs us to work with Him. If we do not do what is required of us, the Lord cannot do what is required of Him. If we have done our part according to what is required of us, our High Priest will divide our spirit and soul by the power of the cross and by the sharp sword of the Holy Spirit. He will cause everything that is of the emotion, the feeling, the mind, and the natural ability to be separated one by one from the spirit and not be mixed at all. To lay on the altar is what is required of us. However, dividing our spirit and soul with a sharp knife is what our High Priest should do. If we have truly given ourselves to the cross, our High Priest will surely fulfill His duty to divide our spirit and soul. This is His work; therefore, we need not worry. Once He sees that we have fulfilled the necessary requirements for Him to work, in due time He will surely divide our spirit and soul.

Indeed, every believer who sees the danger of having spirit and soul mixed can only seek deliverance. The way of deliverance is open yet difficult. The believer must be diligent in praying to clearly see his pitiful condition and know the dwelling place, the work, and the requirement of the Holy Spirit. The believer ought to see the mystery and reality of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, respect this holy presence, and be careful not to have anything that grieves Him. The believer should know that what grieves the Holy Spirit the most, besides sin, and what damages the believers even more than sin is the believer's living and working according to his self-life. The original transgression of man was that he pursued good, wisdom, and knowledge according to his own idea. This kind of transgression is what believers repent of and commit again time after time. Believers ought to know that they have believed in the Lord and that the Holy Spirit has indwelt them already. The Spirit should thus have complete authority, while the soul should completely submit to Him. It is not that since you have prayed and asked the Holy Spirit to work and guide, everything is all right and will be accomplished. This is not the truth. Unless day by day you wholly put to death the soul-life and its ability, wisdom, and feeling, and are honestly willing to submit completely to Him, wait for His teaching, and trust in His working, you will not easily see that He is truly working.

The believer has to see that what divides his soul and spirit is the Word of God. The Lord Jesus Himself is the Word of God, and He will by Himself divide our soul and spirit. Are we willing to let His life and His accomplished work stand between our soul and spirit? Are we willing to seek His life to fill our spirit, in order to deal with the soul so that it cannot be active? The Bible is God's written

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word. The Lord Jesus divides soul and spirit with the teachings in the Bible. Are we willing to follow all the truth? Are we willing to obey the teachings in the Bible? Are we willing to submit to the Lord simply by the teachings in the Bible without our own opinion? Are we willing to be content with the authority of the Bible and to obey without help from men? If we are willing to come into a completely spiritual living, we absolutely have to submit to the Lord and to all His teachings in the Bible. This is necessary, and this is the sharp sword in practice to divide our soul and spirit.

## **A SOUL UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

We have mentioned that the spirit, soul, and body in a human being are like the holy temple, which is divided into the Holiest of all and the outer court, and that God lives in the Holiest of all. There is a veil separating the Holiest of all and the Holy Place. This veil seems to shut the glory and presence of God within the Holiest of all and shut out the Holy Place. This causes man to feel and see only the things outside the veil in the Holy Place and not understand or know the things in the Holiest of all. Other than by believing, one cannot see God's presence in his outer life.

However, the existence of this veil was only temporary. When the time came, the Lord Jesus' body—the reality of the veil (Heb. 10:20)—was crucified on the cross, so that the veil was split from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51). Now the separation between the Holiest of all and the Holy Place has been removed. God's purpose is not to dwell forever only in the Holiest of all. He wants to also expand His presence into the Holy Place. However, He is waiting for the work of the cross to be completed. Only through the cross can the veil be rent and the glory of God shine out from the Holiest of all.

Therefore, when the believer allows the cross to complete its work, God also causes the believer's spirit and soul to have the experience of the Holiest of all and the Holy Place in His holy temple. If a believer submits constantly to the Holy Spirit without any argument, the fellowship between the Holiest of all and the Holy Place becomes better and more harmonious day after day. Before long, he will see a great change. It is the work of the cross that causes the real veil of the holy temple, both in heaven and on earth, to be split. In this way the cross exerts a real and solid effect on the life and experience of the believer, causing him to lose his soul-life and to not have independent acts but rather to completely wait for and rely on the spiritual life to originate, to generate, the power to live and work. It is then that there is an experience of "veil splitting" in the believer's entire spirit and soul.

This veil was "split in two from top to bottom." This is God's work and not man's doing. When the work of the cross has been completed, God according to His own will splits the veil. This is not by our laboring and not by our own strength to grab and ask in order to obtain. Whenever the work of the cross is completed, the veil will be split. Therefore, let us renew our consecration to God, not love ourselves, be willing to put our soul-life to death, and let the One in the Holiest of all be our Lord in everything. If the Lord sees that the cross has done a deep enough work in us, He will surely cause the Holiest of all and the Holy Place in us to become one, just as He, by the power of God, split the veil before so that His Holy Spirit could flow out from His glorious body.

This then will cause the glory of the hidden place of the Most High to fill us abundantly in our daily, sensate life. This will cause all our living and activities in the Holy Place to be sanctified by the glory from the Holiest of all; this will cause our soul to be like the spirit, indwelt and completely governed by the Holy Spirit of God. This will cause our mind, emotion, and will to be filled by the Holy Spirit. Finally, this will cause what we previously kept in the spirit through faith, to be known now even in our

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soul. Moreover, it will never decrease or suffer loss. What a blessed life this is! Now "the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house" (2 Chron. 7:1-2). From now on, our own activities, although they be as good as those of the priests who served God, will lose their opportunity to act in the glory of God. Now the glory of God will be everything, and no more will we emphasize the work of the animal liveliness.

This is the other aspect of the dividing of the spirit and the soul. Concerning the aspect of the soul affecting and controlling the spirit, the work of the cross is to divide the soul from the spirit. But concerning the aspect of being filled with the Holy Spirit and letting the spirit have the authority, the work of the cross is to cause the soul to no longer be independent but be one with the spirit completely. Concerning the experience of our personal living, we should seek that the spirit and the soul become one. If we will thus let the cross and the Holy Spirit work deeply, we will then see that what the soul has lost is not even one ten thousandth of what it has gained. What has died now bears fruit; what was lost is now kept unto eternal life. If our soul-life is under the control of the spirit, we will see that our soul has an extremely great change. Formerly, because it was for ourselves and because it always wanted to act alone, our soul was, so to speak, lost before God and useless in His hands. Now our soul, although lost on the side of man, is gained on the side of God. From now on, we are those spoken of in Hebrews 10:39: "who have faith to the gaining of the soul." This is much deeper than the common saying, "the salvation of the soul." Here it specifically speaks of life. Now that the believer has learned not to act or behave by feeling or by what is seen through the eye, he can have faith to save his life to serve God and glorify God. What seemingly is lost is gained in reality. James 1 also mentions this saving: "Receive in meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (v. 21). When a branch is grafted to a tree, it receives the nature of that tree. Likewise, when the word of God is engrafted into our life, it transmits its nature to us. By this the tree is saved from being useless and is saved even to bear fruit. From the word of life we obtain the life of the word. The branch is not eliminated; rather, it has a new life as its principle of vitality. All of the soul is still here, yet now it is not the soul-life that makes the faculties of the soul living, but rather the life of the word of God. This is the true "salvation of the soul."

Our human nerves are very sensitive and easily stimulated by outside things. Outward conversations, attitudes, environments, and human relationships can easily touch us. Our mind has many thoughts, plans, and imaginations which are truly confused. Our will has many opinions and ideas and loves to do things according to its own whims. None of the faculties of our soul-life give us peace. Whether individually or collectively, the soul-life causes us to shift from time to time, change often, be disturbed, feel confused, and have no peace.

Now, however, because our soul is being governed by the spirit, we can be freed from such disturbance. The Lord Jesus said, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:29). If we are willing to surrender to the Lord, willing to take His yoke, and willing to walk according to the His will, our soul will not be aroused. If we are willing to imitate the Lord and if we will learn of Him, seeing how the Lord was despised by others and how the Lord followed not His own will but the will of God, then the turmoil in our soul will be calmed down. The reason sorrow and grief come is that we are not willing to be satisfied with the same kind of treatment that the Lord received and that we are not willing to submit to God's will and arrangement. If we put the soul-life to death and completely surrender to the Lord, our soul—the soul with sensitive nerves—will rest in the Lord and not misunderstand the Lord. The soul

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under the control of the Holy Spirit is a soul of rest.

Once we were busy planning; now we quietly trust in the Lord. Once we were often grieved and anxious; now we are like a weaned child resting in the bosom of the mother. Once we were full of our own ideas, having many desires and ambitions; now we only consider the will of God to be good and thus rest in God. Truly, it is "perfect submission, perfect delight." When we completely give ourselves to the Lord, all things are peaceful and tranquil. Ephesians 6:6 has a similar message: "But as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the soul." It is not as before, relying on the soul—that is, self-relying—to follow the will of God; rather, it is from the soul, to wholeheartedly, truly follow the will of God. Now, through the working of the cross, the soul-life that formerly rebelled against the will of God completely surrenders to the will of God. Previously, we were merely on the outside, and if we were not carrying out our own affairs according to our own will, then we were doing God's will according to our own will. Now however, we are one with God in everything.

A soul governed by the Holy Spirit is not concerned for itself. "Do not be anxious for your life [soul]" (Matt. 6:25). Now what we seek first is the kingdom of God and His righteousness, believing that God will take care of our daily needs. The soul-life has been dealt with through the cross by the Holy Spirit, so it can no longer be anxious for itself. Self-consciousness is the primary manifestation of the soul. Since the believer has truly been in God and has lost the self, he can fully trust in God. Self-love, self-planning, and self-care—all works of the soul—have now been removed in practice. Therefore, one no longer makes his own plans for these kinds of practical issues.

Because the cross has done its work, we no longer busily plan for ourselves. Previously, we worried, but now, since knowing God, we can peacefully seek His kingdom and His righteousness. If we care for what God cares about, God will care for what we care about. Previously, miracles were rare and strange to us; now we live in the God who performs miracles, knowing He will provide every need. This is not by exercising the mind but by resting in God's hand. Since the power of God serves as our backing, questions concerning our daily life such as eating and drinking become very insignificant.

"So then let those also who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing to a faithful Creator" (1 Pet. 4:19). This is the teaching of the Bible. Sometimes people in the world only know God as the Creator and do not know Him as the Father. The believers, however, not only know Him as the Father but also know Him as the Lord of creation. To speak of Him as the Lord of creation is to make His power known, to make known how the whole universe is under His hand. Before, when we were suffering, we were afraid of man, but now we know that everything is in His hand and has His arrangement. Before, it was difficult to believe that none of the things in this world can move against His will. Now we know that everything in the universe, whether of man, the natural, or supernatural, is in His careful and wise arrangement. Now we know that everything that comes upon us is permitted and predestinated by Him. A soul governed by the Holy Spirit is a peaceful, quiet, and committing soul.

Not only should we commit our soul to the Lord, but we should also love and long for the Lord. "My soul pursues after You" (Psa. 63:8). Now we no longer dare to have faith in ourselves, to be independent, or to serve the Lord according to the whims of the soul. Now, the One whom we follow is the Lord, and we very carefully, even with fear, follow hard after the Lord, not daring to leave Him for one moment. Someone translated this verse, "My soul is glued unto thee." Now we do not act alone but completely surrender to the Lord, not reluctantly but willingly with joy. Now what we hate is the life of

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our self, and the One whom we completely love and long for is the Lord.

This kind of person can only say, together with Mary, "My soul magnifies the Lord" (Luke 1:46). Such a one is no longer openly or secretly puffed up and self-exalting, but knows himself to be useless and is willing to humble himself and exalt the Lord. Now he no longer wants to steal the Lord's glory and give it to the self (soul), but he magnifies the Lord in his soul. If the Lord is not being magnified in the soul, then the Lord is not being magnified in any place.

Only this kind of person considers his life (soul) of no account as if precious (Acts 20:24), but lays down his life (soul) for the brothers (1 John 3:16). If the heart of loving oneself is not lost, then when the Lord calls us in reality to bear the cross for Him, we will shrink back. Because the soul-life is specifically rejected daily, one can, for the sake of the Lord, consider his life "of no account as if precious." For even under normal daily situations, one must live as a martyr, willing to give his life to the cross, so that when the time comes, he can carry out that martyrdom for the Lord. Because daily there is a life willing to be poured out for the brothers, not seeking one's own right or comfort but denying the self every day, one can "lay down [his] life on behalf of the brothers" in that special time and circumstance. The real loving of the Lord and loving of the brothers comes from not loving the self. A Christ who wanted to save Himself and pity Himself could not love us and die for us. If He "loved me," then He would give "Himself up for me." The heart of love comes from the rejecting of the soul-life. The shedding of blood is the source of blessing.

This kind of living is the living wherein the soul prospers (3 John 2). Prosperity comes not because one has gained anything but because one has lost everything. However, the soul-losing life is not a losing life because the soul is lost in God. The soul-life is restricting and selfish. The soul that is lost in the life of God lives in the unlimited life of God. This is liberty, and this is prosperity. The more loss we suffer, the more prosperous our gain will be. Our possessions are not measured by how much we receive but by how much we give. This is the real fruitful living!

However, forsaking the soul-life is not as quick as being delivered from sin. This is our life, and every day we must be willing not to live by it but choose the life of God instead. Thus, the cross in us has to be borne faithfully each time more than the time before. The time is still long. Therefore, we should look away unto the Lord Jesus who, despising the shame, endured the cross. "For compare Him...so that you may not grow weary, fainting in your souls" (Heb. 12:2-3). The way His soul felt about the shame, despising it and enduring the cross, is the goal for those of us willing to tread the path of the cross. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name" (Psa. 103:1).