

## DIVIDING SOUL & SPIRIT (2)

In the last chapter we examined the importance of living by and in the (S)pirit. There we saw that it is from the Spirit of God within our spirit that His life flows through us. However, we are not merely spirit beings. We also have a soul. And it is through this soul (and ultimately through our physical body) that what we are within is expressed to the world.

In a man or woman who does not know Christ, the soul is the leading “organ” within their being. Having no Life in the spirit, they have no choice but to live by the soul-life and express the fallen nature. Their soul is the dominant force in their being. However, once we receive Jesus, this “seat of government” is supposed to change. Now the soul, instead of being in the lead, is meant to become subjugated to the spirit. The soul is to become the servant of the spirit, being directed and controlled by a higher source. The Life of God within us begins to use the faculties of the soul to express the divine nature to the world.

To understand this a little more clearly, it is important to state that the soul has three distinct “capabilities” or faculties. These are: the ability to think, the ability to feel and the ability to decide. The easiest way to remember this is that we have a mind, we have emotions and we have a will. Most Bible teachers today agree on this point that man’s soul has these three parts: mind, emotions and will.

There is nothing inherently wrong with these “faculties.” They were created by God and are necessary for every part of our living. Obviously, everyone must think, feel and decide. The problem is in which “life” is animating or using these capabilities. When the old, PSUCHE life is in control, sin results. When the ZOE life dominates, righteousness is manifested. Whatever thoughts, feelings and decisions initiate in our soul cannot please God. The source is contaminated. But when our thoughts, feelings and decisions flow from the spirit, they are a manifestation of God. Therefore, what we need in our soul is a transfer of leadership. We need to “change sources” so to speak. We must learn to allow the Spirit of God to fill, dominate and use the faculties of the soul. In this way we can fulfill all of His marvelous plans.

Consequently, as we saw in the last chapter, there is an urgent need—a desperate necessity—for every child of God to know when he or she is living by the soul-life or by the spirit. We must experience within our being the “dividing asunder of the soul and spirit” (Heb 4:12). We must be able to know when we are being animated by the old life and when we are experiencing the new. Without this most important revelation, we can only wander in the darkness, stumbling once in a while into the presence of God, perhaps not knowing how or why we got there, and then stumbling out again without a clue as to how to return. Unfortunately, this is the state of many of God’s children.

Since this dividing between the soul and the spirit is so important, we are going

to spend time here speaking in more detail about it. In the last chapter we spoke about what it means to be in the spirit. Here we will investigate how this can effect each separate "part" of our soul.

## THE MIND

We will begin our discussion by speaking about the mind. In an unsaved person, this faculty is usually the dominant one. Ephesians 2:3 speaks of the people of the world who are under the control of the enemy and live fulfilling the desires of the flesh (i.e. the body) and of the mind. Further in Ephesians 4:17, 18 we read that the "rest of the Gentiles" (in this case the unsaved) "walk in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God." So we understand that without God's life, the only option the unbeliever has is to be guided by his mind. This results only in darkness. No matter how "enlightened" the people of the world think that they are, compared to the true spiritual realities, it is only darkness. The wisdom and intelligence of the fallen race does not lead them to God and is only foolishness in His sight (I Cor 3:19) (I Cor 1:21).

When a person comes to Christ therefore, they have the long ingrained habit of living by their mind. This has always been what they have relied upon and so they often continue living in this way. For this reason, Christianity becomes a mental exercise for them. They suppose that "growing in Christ" is a learning process. Depending upon their natural intelligence and ability, they begin to study the things of God and read the Bible with the thought that when they have accumulated enough knowledge, this will enable them to walk in God's ways. They read, they study and they memorize. Perhaps they go to Bible school. They buy many Christian books and accumulate literature. They gather information about "how to" act and react in every situation of life. They know "how to" lead, "how to" teach, "how to" cast out demons, "how to" worship, "how to" disciple, "how to" heal the sick, "how to" have meetings, "how to" deal with this or that situation or this or that kind of person and many other such things. They become full of knowledge about God and this knowledge forms the basis of their Christianity.

These people then have a kind of mental Christianity. It is a product of their mind. As we saw in chapter 3 about the two trees, this is a result of living in independence from God. Once we "know how" to do things, we can then live and act without any dependence on the Spirit whatsoever. This is what it means to walk in the soul. It is to rely upon our mind instead of the Spirit. It is to walk by the tree of knowledge instead of the tree of life. The "Christianity" produced by this kind of activity does not please the Father. It is kind of dry, human imitation of a true spiritual walk. It is a natural effort to please God without really submitting to Him. I Cor 8:2 reads: "If anyone thinks he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know."

Please don't get me wrong. Many of these individuals mean well. They have a real desire to please the Lord. But so did Paul when he was persecuting believers before he was converted. The problem is not with their desire, but with their understanding. Good intentions combined with spiritual darkness will never arrive at God's goal. The Pharisees were trying to please God. They not only read the scriptures but they studied them diligently all the time. But when the Living Word appeared, they were bound up in their human mind and could not recognize Him. They opposed Him to the death. Jesus said to them: "You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal

life . . . but you are not willing to come to me that you may have (ZOE) life" (Jn 5:39,40). Those Christians who walk in their mind often fail to recognize Him when He appears. Not knowing how to walk in the spirit, they are left only with mental analysis which is useless when it comes to discerning spiritual things. Sometimes, they too join in to persecute those who are led by the Spirit of God. Truly the "carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rm 8:7). This means that those whose minds are under the control of their soul-life are in opposition to and even at war with all that God is doing here on the earth.

## THE LAMP STAND

Let us go on from here to speak about God's plan for our mind. God Himself created our mind, so there must be a divine purpose for it. Clearly He does not want us to be ignorant or stupid. He has no use for witless followers who simply do what someone else tells them or who pursue every impulse without thinking. His plan is not for us to become "mindless" but to have our mind filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit. Eph 4:23 teaches us that we need to be "renewed in the spirit of our mind." Does our mind have its own spirit? No. What this means is that the Holy Spirit can "move out" from the holy of holies and fill our mind. As we submit ourselves to Him, He begins to dominate and rule over our thoughts. Our mind then becomes the servant of the spirit. Instead of being in front, doing its own thinking and deciding, the mind becomes a tool through which the Spirit can express Himself. We must learn how to let the Spirit use our mind, filling it with His thoughts, His opinions and His understanding.

This is the experience of the lamp stand. This lamp stand of which we speak was a piece of furniture which God instructed Moses to put in the holy place of the Tabernacle. The "holy place" is the area located just outside of the holy of holies and speaks to us of our soul. This lamp stand was always lighted, burning with holy oil. When God fills our mind, He gives us enlightenment. Our spiritual eyes are opened and we understand things which are not of this world. Thus we have "light." This understanding is not a product of study, memorization or mental effort. It is the result of the Holy Spirit filling our mind. The revelation which we have is not something which we have "learned" mentally but something which we have been shown spiritually. Instead of having information about God, we receive the revelation of God. Obviously, He may use many different ways to reveal things to us. This may come through books, especially the Bible. It may be the product of someone else's preaching or teaching. However, it will never be the result of mental exercise and human ability but of the opening and submitting of our mind to the Holy Spirit.

The Bible teaches us that "we have the mind of Christ" (I Cor 2:16). For far too many, this is only a teaching and has no real meaning in their daily lives. But for those who are filled with the Spirit, it has profound significance. This means that we actually can experience the mind of God filling and using our mind. Instead of trying to "think as He would think" we can have His very thoughts and opinions flowing within us. In every situation of life, we can receive divine instructions. This applies not only to "spiritual things" but even to our common, everyday thinking. Walking in the spirit, we do not function by what we have learned or what we think but by His moment by moment leading. "Knowledge" is not our source. Instead, our actions and words are governed by God Himself.

## THE EMOTIONS

There are other believers who have no liking for study. They have little interest in any kind of “mental” Christianity. Their mind is not and has never been very dominant in their lives. Instead they are governed by their feelings. When these individuals become Christians, they then have a tendency to be guided by emotions. When they “feel like” doing something, they do it. When they do not “feel like” it, then they don’t. When something gives them good feelings, then the thing must be of God. When something does not give them pleasurable sensations, then it must not be from Him. Such believers are not being led by the Spirit. They are walking in the flesh. They judge every meeting, teaching or experience by what kind of feelings it produces within their emotions. Perhaps these believers even think it to be unspiritual to use their mind at all. They simply accept what makes them feel good without any examination of the source or content.

Emotional pleasure or happiness is not the true test of what is from God. Emotions can come from a great variety of sources. Sights, sounds, aromas, entertainment, and many other things can give us good feelings. Evil spirits can produce good feelings. Sex produces good feelings. Shouting, loud singing, strenuous dancing and jumping, intense shaking—all these things can produce a euphoria within the human being. People attend sporting events because they enjoy the “high” they get from the intensity of being in a crowd and having noisy stimulation. Many of God’s children spend their spiritual lives pursuing this sort of excitement. They go to Christian concerts with a lot of loud music. They flock to meetings where people are falling on the floor, shaking or screaming. Although it may have “Christian” trappings, often the results are not spiritual but only emotional. I have noticed over the years that many believers who are addicted to such “feelings” easily fall into sexual sin. They, being led by their emotions and not by the Spirit, fail to discern the source of such stimulations. Theirs is a sensual Christianity.

Unfortunately, there are many churches today who cater to such believers. They strive to have an atmosphere which will produce good feelings in those who attend and cause them to come back. They build elaborate, beautiful “temples” to inspire the soul. They have loud bands to stimulate the emotions. The preaching is carefully tailored to produce only agreeable feelings and not any kind of conviction or discomfort. The pews are comfortable and the air is cooled. The dance and drama teams are there to provide further stimulation in case the music is lacking or the sermon boring. Mistakenly, they think that good feelings are an evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit. Although such activities may attract large numbers of people and appear successful, they can never achieve the objectives of God. They simply satisfy the emotions by appealing to the soul-life. They do nothing to help us exchange the rulership over our feelings from our life to His.

Do not misunderstand me. When the Spirit of God within our spirit “spreads” into our soul, in our emotions we can experience a great variety of feelings. In fact, this is just what our Lord wants to do. He wants to use our emotions to express His feelings in this world. Since He is an infinite being, He can express Himself in our emotions in an unlimited variety of ways. Through the Spirit we can feel joy. We can have peace. We can love. This is a love not only for our friends, but for those who are unlovable. This love can even thrive in us for our enemies. Also, in God we can feel sorrow. We can be grieved. We might feel His anger, or His jealousy or His boldness. But in order for this to happen, we must submit our emotions to His control. When God rules our emotions, the true personality of Jesus can be exhibited in us. The question before us is not

whether or not we have feelings, but who is governing these sensations. The question is not whether or not a certain manifestation is “right,” but which life is the source of the manifestation.

The Spirit of God can lead us to shout, to dance and to sing. He can stimulate us with many intensely enjoyable feelings. In fact, nothing in this world can compare with the emotions which God can give. However, we must discern the source. God can give good feelings but not all good feelings are from God. God can be exciting, but not all excitement is from God. Often, after God has given an individual or a group a powerful emotional experience, they then spend their energy trying to recreate that experience through soulish means, i.e. loud music, physical exertion, shouting, etc. How we need the Word of God to divide between the soul and the spirit within us! We urgently need revelation to know the source from which we are living. If it is the Spirit of God, then the feelings are acceptable. If the source is our own life, then they are totally rejected. Truly “the flesh profits nothing” (Jn 6:63).

When we experience emotional pleasure as a result of the Holy Spirit living in us, this is the experience of the showbread table. This table is also one of the pieces of furniture which is in the holy place, just outside the holy of holies in the tabernacle. In the last chapter we have seen that in our spirit we are able to eat of the “hidden manna” (Rev 2:17) which comes from communion with God. But when we are eating in our spirit, our soul can also be satisfied. It too can know the enjoyment of the presence of God. Every human being needs emotional pleasure at some time or other. A life with no enjoyment can become unbearable. And so our God in His great wisdom has also provided for us an emotional delight. The loaves of fresh bread can be of great satisfaction when our God chooses to give us this experience.

## THE WILL

As we have seen, some believers try to live their Christian life by the efforts of their mind. Others rely heavily on their emotions. But there is still another group. These are ones who have a particularly strong will. Perhaps these are the most difficult cases to treat. Such individuals can make themselves to do almost anything. Through the force of will power, they can meet, at least in their own eyes, whatever standard is set before them. When they become converted, they simply begin to use their strong will to “live the Christian life.” All the principles and admonitions of the New Testament become a new challenge for them to meet by their efforts. Every precept, whether it be tithing, submitting, helping or any other such thing, is just another opportunity for them to show that they are willing and able to do it.

These individuals believe that they are very committed to God. They are in fact, using every fiber of their being to do His will. Very often such people look down on those who are weak. Those who cannot overcome persistent sins and weakness are despised because they obviously do not have “a strong enough commitment.” The reason such cases are hard to treat is that people with a very strong will are able to make a good show of Christianity. They are able to “perform” in such a manner that it is hard to find fault and hard to show them where they are erring. Through their will power, they have stopped all obvious sins. They have done all that is expected of them. What could God want more than this? Compared to many others they are really able to do the will of God. The best hope for such people is that God will arrange a challenge for them which they cannot meet. In His mercy, He can bring them up against a situation which is simply too hard and too big. He can bring them to the end of

themselves.

Of course, as we have been seeing the exertion of our will is not at all what God really wants. All the efforts of the soul-life, no matter how good the results may appear, are rejected by Him. Our own righteousness is like filthy rags to Him (Is 64:6). I have been told that the Hebrew word here indicates rags soiled by a woman who is having her menstrual period. Obviously, our Lord is not pleased with such efforts. His desire is that we would submit the control of our will completely to Him. His objective is that He would be able to use our will to do His will. The only real way to discern when someone is living by the spirit or simply living by the power of his or her will is to sense the "flavor" of what they are doing. Is the result of their efforts the pleasant aroma of Christ? Or is it the stench of self-effort? Are others attracted by the sweetness of their character or repelled by a hard, dry sense of demand? May God have mercy upon us to know if we are merely trying to live for Him or actually living by Him.

### THE INCENSE ALTAR

This brings us then to the experience of the incense altar. As we have noted, there are several pieces of furniture in the holy place. We have already spoken about the lamp stand and the showbread table. However, there is also in this room an altar for incense. Interestingly, this fixture is linked very closely with the holy of holies. Before the high priest could enter the most holy place, he had to take some of this incense and put it in a golden censer. Then, with this sweet smoke rising upward to God from the censer in his hand, he could pass behind the veil.

The human will is all important in our relationship with God. He will do nothing which is against our will. That is to say He will do nothing inside our being unless we are completely and thoroughly willing and ready for Him to do it. Therefore, the will is pivotal in our relationship with Him. If we are to enter in behind the veil, our will must be completely yielded to Him. If we are to enter into and live continually in the Spirit, we must have our will offered to Him on the altar. The sweet savor of this incense must always rise before His throne. There must continually be before Him the yielded submission of our will. If not, we will find it difficult to enter into His presence and impossible to stay in the spirit. True Christianity is not using the force of our will to try to please Jesus, but submitting our will completely to Him so that He can do whatever He wants within us. The total ceding of control—the unconditional offering of our will—is necessary for everyone who will live a truly spiritual life.

The total yielding of our will to God must be considered the point of beginning of a genuine walk with the Lord. The necessity of such an offering should be presented in a clear, unmistakable way to all those interested in Jesus. Without it, although some may "receive" Jesus, they cannot go on very far in their spiritual life. I have met countless numbers of "Christians" who have never made this commitment. They have never fully surrendered control of their will to God. He is not yet Lord of their life. They cannot progress because they are in a constant battle with the Spirit about who is in charge. They never grow spiritually, they never overcome their problems and sins, they are a constant burden on the other believers around them, all because of this one deficiency. They have never yielded up their will completely to Christ. Unless you have come to this point without resistance or reserve, you will go nowhere in the spiritual walk.

In order to walk with Jesus in a consistent, daily way, the strength of our will must be broken. We must come to a point when we no longer rely upon our own

strength to do the will of God. We must come to the “end of ourselves” so that our strength is only in God (II Cor 1:9). For those who have a very strong will, this process is often prolonged and painful. Many times our Lord must allow such a person to pass through very severe tests and trials to that their natural man can be broken down. The confidence they have in themselves to be able to decide and do can only be touched in a permanent way by failure and suffering. Jacob was a confident, scheming man. He took advantage of his brother and cheated his father. He managed to extract a lot of wealth from his father-in-law and finally wrestled with God Himself. In the end, God touched his thigh. Something within him was permanently broken so that he was no longer whole. After this experience his name was changed from Jacob, i.e. one who takes advantage, to Israel, i.e. prince of God. How many of God’s children today need this divine touch, the breaking of the soulish strength to do and be for Him, so that God can finally do and be what He desires through them.

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

In the last chapter we spoke about what it means to be in the spirit. That is, when we are experiencing communion with God, when we are sensing His divine leadership and when we are knowing His law written upon our hearts, then we are in the spirit. Here we are understanding that not only can we know God in our spirit but He can also give us many experiences, sometimes very powerful experiences, in our soul. However, two points need to be made very clear.

Number one: Even though we can have many enjoyable experiences of the Spirit in our soul, we should be careful never to seek for these “experiences.” If we look for revelation, there are many sources of “revelation.” If we seek emotions, there are many ways in which our feelings can be stimulated, including the action of evil spirits. A wise Christian will not allow his emotions to guide him but will allow God to guide his emotions. Our necessity is to continually seek after the Person of Jesus Christ. Our urgent need is to walk daily in the spirit. When it is His time, He will give us revelation. When He deems it appropriate, He will give us pleasurable emotions. As we submit ourselves completely to Him in our will, all that we need will flow out from our spirit to our soul.

Number two: We should never be led only by our “revelations” or feelings, but by the presence of God in our spirit. Whatever is happening in our soul—that is our mind, emotions and will—we must always be careful to judge it by our spirit. In every question, we must sense the peace of God in our innermost being. We must walk in constant communion with Jesus, be led by His authority and know whether or not we are offending Him. This is the secret—walking in communion with God. Far too many believers rely upon dreams, prophecies, “words” or the advice of others for their guidance. Others depend on their emotional sensations to lead them. These are soulish Christians. They are looking continually to the activities of the soul as their source of direction. They are not being truly led by the Spirit but by a great variety of sources which can and do influence the soul. Certainly our God uses such things as dreams, prophetic words, etc. to speak to us or guide us. These things are important for us in the Christian life. The point here is that we must not depend on these things, but always weigh and judge them through our communion with God in the spirit. We must ultimately be led by the spirit, not the soul.

### **PHYSICAL FEELINGS**

How many times through the years have I heard someone exclaim, "Did you feel that?" referring to some physical sensation they had received during a Christian gathering. This may have been goose bumps, a tingling sensation, a warm or cold feeling, a sense of rushing wind or any number of other things. For them this was an indication that God was present or that something which was said or done was from Him. There is no doubt that the Spirit of God can and does produce within us many physical feelings. In Acts for example, He came as a "mighty rushing wind" (Acts 2:2). The Spirit can not only fill our soul but also our physical body. The problem is that far too many believers begin to rely upon these sensations. They depend upon them for their daily direction and guidance. Worse yet, they begin to seek such things as if this were the same as seeking God. They do not know how to walk in the spirit and so only are being led by the flesh. God can give us physical feelings, but all physical sensations are not God. Such stimulation can come from many sources. Therefore, without living in constant communion with God in our spirit, we have no reliable way to judge whether our physical sensations are from Him or not.

When we walk by the soul and are led by soulish and physical sensations, we manifest the nature of the soul and the flesh. For this reason in the church today we see so much of the natural man. We see pride, greed, lust, struggles for power, gossip, envy, jealousy, dishonesty, one brother or sister taking advantage of another and many such things. These are all a result of depending upon the soul and the faculties of the soul instead of the spirit. For those leaning on the soul-life, the rulership of the Spirit is not experienced. The conviction of sin, which we find in the presence of God does not happen. Natural thoughts and feelings are mixed together with spiritual ones in a way that produces a great confusion in the believers. Not knowing how to live in the spirit, they have no basis to discern which is which. They may experience a real "touch" from God from time to time, but then try to recreate it by soulish means. They don't know how to live in genuine, constant communion with Him. Consequently, the churches today are filled with fleshly believers who are having very little victory over sin and the devil.

How we need the living Word of God to penetrate the darkness within us. How we need Him to separate our soul from our spirit. How we need His light to show us how to live by His presence in our spirit and from this place allow Him to reveal Himself through us to the world.