

## **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 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.

### **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 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.

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).

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 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 unsubmissive, 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. 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 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 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 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.

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 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.