

CHAPTER THREE

SPIRITUAL WORK

As a believer gradually progresses on his spiritual path, he will gradually see more clearly that living for himself is a sin, even the greatest sin. A believer who lives for himself is like a grain of wheat which is not willing to fall into the ground and die; therefore, he remains just one grain. A believer may seek the filling of the Holy Spirit and want to become a spiritual man with power. What is his goal, however? It is to make himself happy and feel more comfortable! If he is asked to live completely for God and God's work, regardless of his own happiness and feeling, he will shrink and not go on. This indicates that he misunderstands the meaning of being spiritual. In the deepest part of his heart, the self-love of the soul-life has not been forsaken. Every person who is a child of God is a servant of God. Everyone has received a gift from the Lord; no one is without a gift (Matt. 25:15). God places each believer in His church and gives each one a portion of labor which he must fulfill. God's intention, from the beginning to the end, is not that the believers' spirit should become a pool of spiritual life. If this were so, the water would begin to dry up. The regression of a believer and the decrease of spiritual power are probably mainly due to this cause. Once the life of God is blocked up in the spirit, a believer begins to feel the drought. Actually, the spiritual life is for spiritual work. Spiritual work is nothing less than the expression of the spiritual life. The secret of living a spiritual life is to let life flow out without interruption and reach the lives of others.

The food of the believer's spiritual life is to work the work of God (John 4:34). If a spiritual believer (beginners have not advanced sufficiently enough to be considered here) exclusively pays attention to his own spirituality, making his Bible reading and prayer his recreation, then as he cares for himself, the kingdom of God suffers a great loss. He must believe that God can sustain him, not only physically but also spiritually. If he is willing to bear the hunger, not seeking food when he is hungry, but seeking only to do what God wants of him, he will be fully satisfied. To obey and do the will of God is to eat spiritual food. In contrast, those who pay attention to things that nourish them will obtain nothing. But those who single-heartedly care for the things of the kingdom of God will be fully satisfied. When a believer does not care for himself, but only minds the Father's business, he will see that he is always full and satisfied.

A believer must never overly desire something new. What he really needs is to guard what he has gained so that it will not be lost, because what has not been lost has been gained. The way to guard is to use what he has gained, because burying it in the ground is a sure way to lose it. When a believer lets the life in his spirit flow everywhere, he not only gains other people, but he also gains himself. However, this gain is due not to wanting to gain himself but to losing himself to gain others. The spiritual life within the spiritual man must flow out by means of spiritual work without. If the spirit of the believer is habitually open—it must be shut to the enemy—then the life of God will flow out from it to save and build up many people. Once spiritual work stops, spiritual life is hindered. These two things cannot be separated.

No matter what worldly profession a believer may have, there is always a sphere of his work. The spiritual believer knows his place in the Body of Christ; therefore, he also knows the sphere of his own work. Every member has his usefulness, and fulfilling his usefulness is his work. Some gifts are for certain kinds of members, and some gifts are for the whole Body. The believer must know the sphere of his own gift and work within that sphere. Herein lies the failure of many spiritual believers. Either they withdraw

from work so that the spiritual life does not have the possibility to develop, or they work outside their sphere so that the spiritual life is damaged. The harm from not using the hands and feet is the same as misusing the hands and feet. Retaining the spiritual life is the unique way to lose it, but working recklessly also hinders the release of spiritual life.

SPIRITUAL POWER

If we want to receive power to witness for Christ and fight Satan, we have no alternative but to seek the experiences of the filling of the Holy Spirit. It is true that at present more and more people seek the filling of the Holy Spirit. But to what end do they seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit and receive spiritual power? How many seek power to show off? How many are for making their own flesh more splendid? How many hope to receive power which would enable people to fall before them, saving them the labor of searching and fighting? We have to see clearly what our motive is in receiving spiritual power. If our motive is not in accordance with God and is not out of God, we will not receive. The Holy Spirit of God will not rest upon the "flesh" of man. The place He rests upon is only on the spirit that God has newly created. This is not to say that we may let the outer man (the flesh) live while asking God to baptize our inner man (the spirit) in the Holy Spirit. If the flesh has not yet passed through dealing, then the Spirit of God will not descend upon the spirit of man, because giving power to a fleshly man will have no other result than to make him boast and become even more fleshly.

We have often said that the cross comes before Pentecost; the Holy Spirit will not give power to men and women who have not yet passed through the cross. Golgotha is the only road to the upper room of Jerusalem. Only those who follow this pattern have the possibility of receiving the power of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God says, "This shall be a holy anointing oil...upon man's flesh shall it not be poured" (Exo. 30:31-32). Regardless of whether it is the most filthy or the most cultured flesh, the Holy Spirit of God cannot descend upon it. If there are no nail prints from the cross, there can be no anointing oil of the Holy Spirit. The death of the Lord Jesus is the verdict of God upon all men in Adam: "All must die." God waited until after the Lord Jesus died; only then did He send down the Holy Spirit. Likewise, unless a believer experiences the death of the Lord Jesus and has died to all that belongs to the old creation, he cannot hope to see the power of the Holy Spirit. In history, Pentecost came after Golgotha; in spiritual experience, the filling of the power of the Holy Spirit also comes after bearing the cross.

The flesh is forever condemned before God. God wants it to die. A believer may not want the flesh to die, but may instead want to receive the Holy Spirit to adorn it and provide more power to work for God (of course, this is absolutely impossible). What is our motive in all this? Is our motive personal attraction, reputation, being welcomed by people, being admired by spiritual believers, success, acceptance by man, building up our own self? Those with unclean motives—"double-minded" motives—cannot receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. We may think that our motives are very clean, but our great High Priest will let us know through the environment whether or not our motives are really clean. Without coming to the point where our present work completely fails and people despise and reject us, considering our name to be evil, it will be very difficult to know whether or not our motive is completely for God. Everyone who has really been used by the Lord has walked this path. Whenever the cross has accomplished its work, at that moment we receive the power of the Holy Spirit.

Are there not many believers who do not have deep experiences of the cross, yet they have the power to witness for the Lord and have been greatly used by the Lord? The

Bible tells us that in addition to the holy anointing oil, there is an anointing oil that is "like" it (Exo. 30:33). It is similarly compounded, but it is not the holy anointing oil. We should not desire success and greatness; we should only observe whether or not our old creation—everything we have by birth—has passed through the cross. Without the flesh passing through death, the power which we have is surely not the power of the Holy Spirit. All believers with spiritual insight, who have arrived at the other side of the veil, know that such successes have no spiritual value.

When a believer has condemned his flesh and walks according to the spirit, he can truly receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, he wants his flesh to receive spiritual power. If the flesh does not pass through death, the spirit has no possibility of receiving power, because when the power of the flesh remains, the flesh still reigns and the spirit is oppressed. The power of the Holy Spirit only descends upon a spirit which is full of the Holy Spirit, because only then is there a possibility for the power of the Holy Spirit to flow out. When the spirit is full, the power that comes in will overflow. Therefore, on the one hand, the believer must die to the old creation, and on the other hand, he must learn how to walk together with the Holy Spirit in his living. Then he can receive power.

Every believer must seek for the power of the Holy Spirit. Understanding in the mind is not enough. The Holy Spirit must surround his spirit. Whether his work is effective depends on whether or not the believer has the experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit needs an outlet. What a pity that He cannot find an outlet in many believers. Some are hindered by sin, some are proud, some are cold, some are filled with their own opinion, and some trust in the soul-life. The power of the Holy Spirit has no place to exude! Besides the Holy Spirit, we still have too many sources!

In the matter of seeking the power of the Holy Spirit, we must keep our mind clear and our will active. This guards against the counterfeit of the enemy. Moreover, we must let God remove from our lives, one by one, everything that belongs to sin and everything that is unrighteous and doubtful. We must consecrate our whole being to the Lord. "Receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:14). Rest in God and consider that God will do according to His Word in His own time. Do not forget this matter. If God delays, we must allow His light to examine our own living even more. If God allows us to have some feeling when we receive the power, we may rejoice. If He does not, we still should believe that He has done it.

Just by looking at a believer's experience, we can tell whether or not he has received power. Whoever has received power will develop a very keen awareness of the senses of his spirit. He will receive eloquence (albeit not worldly) to witness for the Lord. His work will be effective and bear everlasting fruits. Power is the basic condition for spiritual work.

After a believer receives the power of the Holy Spirit, he will have a clear feeling concerning the senses of his spirit. In the work of God, a believer must keep his spirit free to allow the Holy Spirit to flow out His life after he receives power. To keep the spirit free is to keep the spirit always in the condition wherein the Holy Spirit can work.

For example, God may command a believer to lead a meeting. The spirit of this believer needs to be free. He should not come into the meeting with many burdens or loads still in his spirit. This will cause the whole meeting to have a burden and become "hardened" and unbreakable. The one who leads the meeting must not come to the meeting with his own burden, hoping that the congregation will function or assist him to be free of his

burden. Depending on the response of the congregation to free the leader of the meeting from his spiritual burden will result in failure.

A believer's own spirit must be buoyant and without entanglement when he arrives at the meeting place. Many at the meeting are full of burdens when they come. The leader of the meeting must first release them by means of prayers, hymns, or the truth before he gives the message of God. If the leader of the meeting has a burden from which he cannot be freed, how can he hope that others would be free?

We must know that spiritual meetings are a fellowship between spirit and spirit. A speaker releases a message from his spirit, and the listeners receive the words of God with their spirit. Whether a believer is a leader or a listener, when his spirit has a burden and is not free, it is not able to open toward God and respond to God's words; therefore, a believer's own spirit must be free. Furthermore, the leader must first endeavor to free the spirits of the congregation before delivering a message of God.

We have to obtain the power of the Holy Spirit before we can do a powerful work. We have to keep our spirit free for the power to flow out from the spirit. The expression of the power upon a believer is in different measures. How much he experiences Golgotha will determine how much he will also experience Pentecost. If the spirit of the believer is really buoyant, the Holy Spirit will be able to work.

However, in working, especially with regard to an individual, there is sometimes the experience of the spirit's being closed. This may be caused by the other party. Perhaps the person you are meeting has a particular condition which makes your spirit feel closed. He may not have an open spirit and mind or the capability to receive the truth; he may have an improper thought in his mind that blocks the flowing out of the spirit. If others have these kinds of conditions, this will cause the spirit of the worker to feel closed. In many instances, we only need to look at the attitude of the one who comes to us to know whether or not we can do a spiritual work toward him. If we feel that our spirit has been closed because of him, we cannot spread the truth to him.

If our spirit feels closed and we force ourselves to work, the work will probably not be from the spirit but rather just a product of the mind. Only work done from the spirit has lasting and effective fruit. What is produced from the mind will always lack spiritual power. If we do not first remove a person's hindrances by prayers and preparative labor so that our spirit will be free to spread the Word of God, our work will lose its effectiveness. Believers must learn to walk according to the spirit so that they can work in the spirit.

THE INITIATION OF SPIRITUAL WORK

It is not a small matter to initiate anything. A believer should not rashly do something just because it is good, needful, and profitable to others. These are not sufficient reasons to prove that a work is according to the will of God. Perhaps God wants to raise up others to do the work, or He may prefer to allow the work to stop temporarily. Although it may be hard to let go from the human point of view, God knows how to take care of it. Therefore, goodness, necessity, and profitableness are altogether insufficient to be the guidelines to our work.

The book of Acts is the best pattern for our work. In Acts we do not see someone "consecrating to be a preacher," "deciding to do the Lord's work," "becoming a

missionary," or "becoming a pastor," etc. Rather, we see the Holy Spirit Himself appointing people and sending people to work. God does not recruit men to give themselves for the work; God only sends the persons whom He wants. We do not see anyone choosing to do a work himself; only God selects the laborers for His work. There is no place for the thought of man's flesh. If God wants something, even a Saul will not be able to resist. If God does not want something, even a Simon will not be able to buy it with money. As the Lord of all, God controls His own work, not allowing even a little part of man to be mixed in with it. Man does not come to work; rather, God "sends out" the laborers. Therefore, spiritual work must begin with a personal calling from the Lord Himself. One must not go forth to work because of the entreaty of preachers, the urging of relatives and friends, or the affinity of his own nature to the holy Word. Only those who are not wearing fleshly shoes can stand upon the holy ground of God's work. Much failure, waste, and confusion happen because man himself comes to work rather than being sent to work.

Even if a man is selected, he cannot then begin to act freely. From the viewpoint of the flesh, no other work in the world is more constricting than spiritual work. We read in Acts phrases such as: "the Holy Spirit said," "the Lord said to him," "the Holy Spirit said to him," "sent out by the Holy Spirit," "forbidden by the Holy Spirit." Other than obeying, the worker has no authority to offer any opinion. At that time the work of the apostles was nothing other than knowing the mind of the Holy Spirit in their intuition and then following it. How simple this was! If spiritual work needs a believer to somehow use his own effort to devise, calculate, maneuver, and worry about it, then only those who are naturally gifted, intelligent, and educated will be able to work. However, God has completely put aside everything which is of the flesh. As long as a believer's spirit towards God is holy and clean, lively and full of power, he will be able to follow the Lord's direction and do a very effective work. God has never given believers the authority to control the work; He only wants them to listen to what He says in their spirit.

Samaria had a "great revival," but Philip was not responsible for the continuing work of nourishing. He had to leave immediately and go to the wilderness to save a Gentile eunuch. Ananias had never heard of Saul's conversion, and according to his reasoning, it meant death to go and intercede for him; however, he did not decide for himself. The Jewish rule prohibited Jews from going to a Gentile home to associate with them, but when the Holy Spirit spoke, Peter could not resist. Paul and Barnabas were sent by the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit still had the authority to forbid them from going to Asia and the authority to later lead Paul to Asia to establish the church in Ephesus. All the work is in the hands of the Holy Spirit; a believer should just obey. If the work was according to human thought, likes, and dislikes, then in the early days, they would not have gone to many places where they should have gone, and they would have gone to many places where they should not have gone. These experiences show us that we should not follow our own thought, reason, preferences, and decisions; rather, we should follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in our spirit. They also show us that the Holy Spirit does not lead through our thoughts, preferences, and decisions; on the contrary, our thoughts, preferences, and decisions are completely opposite to the leading of the Holy Spirit in our spirit. If the apostles could not work according to their mind, emotion, and will, how can we?

All the work that God calls us to do is revealed in the intuition of the spirit (see Section Five, Chapter One). When a believer acts according to the thoughts of the mind, the activities of the emotion, and the ambitions of the will, he goes outside of the will of God.

Only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; all the other things are not. All of a believer's work must only come from receiving revelation in the spirit after trusting and waiting upon God; otherwise, the flesh will come in. God will surely give us the spiritual power to do everything that He calls us to do. Therefore, there is an important principle of never working beyond the strength in our spirit. If we work beyond our spirit, we will draw on our own power for assistance. This is the beginning of misery. Overstretching in the work will prevent us from walking according to the spirit and from doing real spiritual work.

Almost everyone today uses rationality, thoughts, reasons, emotions, feelings, likes, wishes, desires, etc., as the standard for work. But all of these are from the soul and have no spiritual value. We should know that these things are good servants, but they are not good masters; if we follow them, we will fail. Spiritual work must come forth from the spirit. God will not reveal His will in any place other than in the spirit.

Furthermore, when people need spiritual help, the worker should never allow soulish feelings to overcome the spiritual relationship. Besides a completely pure desire to help their spirituality, other soulish feelings are damaging. This is often a danger and snare to a worker. Love, affection, concern, worry, interest, fervency, etc., must all be completely guided by the Holy Spirit. When they do not obey this law, some workers for Christ have moral and spiritual failures. On the one hand, we may let natural attraction and human desire control our work; on the other hand, we may let natural hatred and a lack of human affection control our work. In both cases the result will be failure, and the life of the worker will be desolate. Many times, even regarding the loved ones who are most dear to us, a relationship based upon the flesh must be placed in a secondary position, sometimes even completely disregarded, before spiritual results can be obtained. Our intentions and wishes must be completely consecrated to the Lord.

We should work only when we know in the intuition that the work is according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The flesh does not have a possibility of joining in God's work. The extent of our spiritual usefulness depends on how deeply we let the cross cut our flesh. Superficial accomplishments matter little; only the work that is done by God, through men and women who have been crucified, matters. Even works that are done in the name of the Lord Jesus with fervency and labor, for the sake of some good cause or for the mission of the kingdom of the heavens, are not sufficient to cover up the flesh. God only wants Himself to do the work; He does not want the flesh to interfere with Him. We should realize that even in the matter of serving God, there is the possibility of offering "strange fire" and of being "not spiritual." This will stir the wrath of God. All of the fire that is not kindled in our spirit by the Holy Spirit is strange fire and sin in the eyes of God. Every work which is done for God is not necessarily the work of God. Doing something for Him is not enough. The real question is who is doing it? If God Himself does not work from the spirit of the believer, and there is only the activity of a believer using his own strength, then the work cannot count before God. Everything out of the flesh will decay with the flesh. Only that which comes from God will last forever. Only doing the work which God commanded will not be in vain.

THE GOAL OF SPIRITUAL WORK

The goal of spiritual work is nothing other than the spirit of man receiving life and building up the spirit which has life. If the aim of our work does not pay attention to the spirit in the deepest part of man, then our work will not have any spiritual value and result. Sinners do not need some sort of beautiful thought; rather, they need life.

Believers do not need more knowledge of the Bible; rather, they need something which can feed their spiritual life. If all that we have is just excellent paragraphs, clever illustrations, deep meanings, wise words, or clear reasonings, then we can only give the mind of man one more thought, the emotion one more stimulation, and the will one more decision. After so much effort, we still allow the person upon whom we have worked to go away just as he came—with a dead spirit. A sinner does not need better reasonings, more tears, or a firmer resolve; he needs the resurrection of the spirit. A believer does not need the building up of the outward man; he needs the more abundant life which can make his spirit grow. If we pay attention only to the outward man and forget the inner man, the spirit of man, then all our work, even though it is complete and absolute, will eventually be empty. This work is the same as not working and may even be worse because time is wasted!

A person may be emotionally touched, shed tears, confess his sins, understand doctrines, admit the reasonableness of redemption, be interested in religion, resolve, repent, sign his name, read the Bible, pray, be "revived," rejoice, and testify. However, his spirit may still not have received the life of God and may be just as dead as before. The soul of man can do all these things regardless of whether his spirit is dead or alive. We do not despise them, but we know that if the spirit is not made alive, these things are just sprouts with no roots and will dry up when the sun shines on them. In the regeneration of the spirit, there may be these expressions outwardly in the soul; however, in the deepest part of his whole being he has received a new life, enabling him to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. If the spirit has not resurrected so that he can know God in the intuition, none of the work will have any spiritual result.

We must realize that it is possible to have a "false faith" and a "false regeneration." Many have confused "apprehending" with "believing." To apprehend is just to understand in the mind that this doctrine is reasonable and believable. To believe, in the biblical sense, is to be united. To believe that the Lord Jesus died for us is to unite ourselves in the death of the Lord Jesus. A person may understand the doctrine, but he may not believe in the Lord Jesus. We should pay attention to the fact that man is not saved by his own doings but by receiving eternal life through believing in the Son of God. Man must believe in the Son of God. Many have "believed the doctrine of redemption" but have not believed in the redeeming Savior. Many have put the blood of the Lamb in the container but have not applied this blood on the door of their heart. Regeneration may also be false! The living of many so-called Christians seems to be the same as that of the genuinely regenerated. They are very clean, pious, and willing to help others; they know how to pray, often read the Bible, often come to meetings, and are very loving! They exert a great effort to lead others to believe in Christ. Although they have all these things and even say that the Lord Jesus is their Savior, they have a basic lack. They do not know God in their intuition. They may hear and talk about God, but they do not know God, nor do they have a personal knowledge of God. "My own know Me...and they shall hear My voice" (John 10:14, 16). Those who do not know the Lord and do not know the Lord's voice are not the Lord's genuine sheep.

Since the relationship between man and God begins at regeneration and is all in the spirit, all our works should focus on this point. If one only wants superficial success and his goal is just to make people fervent and excited, he will find that there is nothing of God in his work. Once we know the position of the spirit, our work must have a fundamental change. Rather than working aimlessly, following what we think is good, we should have a clear goal to build up the spirit of man. While we previously emphasized natural things, now we must stress the things of the Spirit of God. The

meaning of spiritual work is nothing other than working by the spirit to enliven the spirit of others. All other work is not genuine spiritual work.

If we truly know that all that we have cannot give life to others, we will see how useless we are. If we truly do not rely on or use anything of ourselves, then we will see how weak we are. Then we will see how much power our inner man, our new I, and our spiritual life really has. Because we ordinarily live by the soul, we do not know how powerless our spirit is. Once all the other help from our soul is eliminated and we solely depend on the power of the spirit, we will realize that the life in our spirit is so small. When we no longer want others to understand in their mind, when we no longer want them to be moved in their emotion, and when we no longer want them to decide in their will, and instead only want their spirit to receive life, we will see that we absolutely cannot give life to others unless the Holy Spirit uses us. "Who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). If God does not beget them, truly we cannot beget them. Then we will realize that all the work must be done by God and that we are just empty vessels. Within us there is nothing which can beget people, and within a man there is nothing which can beget himself. Rather, it is God who pours out His life from our spirit. Therefore, spiritual work is nothing other than the work which God does Himself. Everything that is not done by God cannot be regarded as spiritual work.

We must ask God to reveal this to us, to let us know the nature of His great work and that we need His great power in order to do His work. Then we will realize that our opinions are truly foolish and our self-reliance is truly laughable; all our works are nothing but "dead works." Although many times God grants us special mercies and lets our work have results beyond what we deserve, we must not think that we can do even more. Any work from ourselves is useless and dangerous. The work of God cannot be accomplished in a fervent atmosphere and attractive environment, by romantic thoughts, poetic imaginations, idealistic viewpoints, rational suggestions, impassioned persuasions, or by occasionally arousing the will to encourage people to have a lasting zeal. If spiritual work was based on our imaginations and not on reality, these methods could be used. But if spiritual work truly causes the spirit of man to be regenerated, resurrected, and receive new life, it can only be done through the power of God, through which He raised the Lord Jesus from among the dead.

If we do not give people the life of God, then there will be no praise in the heavens. Regardless of whether our work is full of reasonings, emotions, and words which can cause people to resolve in their will, or even if our work is completely against reasons, feelings, and stimulations, if it does not issue from the spirit in which the Holy Spirit dwells, our work will not cause man to receive life. Although counterfeit spiritual power may produce similar results, the dead spirit of man can never genuinely receive life from it. Many things may have been gained, but the goal of spiritual work has not been obtained.

If our goal is truly to impart life to others, then the power we use must be the power of God. If we utilize the power of the soul, we will encounter failure. The soul may be living (Gen. 2:7), but it cannot give life; "it is the Spirit who gives life" (John 6:63). The Lord Jesus is "the last Adam [who] became a life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45). "He poured out His soul unto death" (Isa. 53:12). Those who are channels for the life of the Lord Jesus must also deliver their soul-life to death and work by the life of the spirit so that people can be regenerated. Otherwise, even though the soul-life may be beautiful, it has no power to give birth. Drawing real power from the natural life to do any spiritual work is

impossible. The old creation never helps the new creation. If we have revelation from the Holy Spirit and work through the power of the Holy Spirit, our audience will be self-reproved and will allow God to enliven their spirits. Otherwise, the sermon we preach will become an excellent ideal which can stir people up temporarily, but nothing spiritual will subsequently happen. The one who depends on the power of the spirit may use the same words, but these words will become life to the spirit. The words of the one who depends on the power of self will become human ideals. Moreover, the work that is done by utilizing the power of the soul will cause these people to demand these feelings and ideals more and more. Therefore, they will stay around whoever can give them these things. Someone who is ignorant will consider this to be spiritual success because many people have been gained. However, someone who has spiritual knowledge will realize that they have no life in their spirit, because their spirit still cannot move. This kind of work in the religious realm is like opium and alcohol to the physical body. Man needs life, not ideals and stimulus. Therefore, a believer has no responsibility other than to consecrate his own spirit as a vessel for God's use and to commit to death all that is of his self. God could greatly use His children to be channels of life to enable sinners to receive salvation and saints to receive edification, but they block their own spirits on the one hand, and on the other hand, they give to others only what they have in themselves. All that the audience receives are the thoughts, reasons, and emotions of the worker. After all the speaking, the audience does not receive the Lord as their Savior so that their dead spirit can be made alive. If we understand that our goal is to let the spirit of others receive life, then we ourselves must have considerable preparation. If we really lose our soul and depend on the spirit, we will see that the words which the Lord speaks from our mouths "are spirit and are life."

THE CESSATION OF SPIRITUAL WORK

Spiritual work often flows with the current of the Holy Spirit without any constraint and without the need for the strength of the flesh. This is not to say that there is no opposition from the world or attack by the enemy; rather, it means that in the Lord there is always the sense of having the Lord's anointing. When a believer's work is needed by God, he will feel the flow of the Holy Spirit no matter what kind of difficulty. The Holy Spirit has always been for the expression of the life of the spirit. This kind of work is very spontaneous. It is expansive, and it expands the life in the spirit.

However, many of God's servants who are urged by the environment (or other reasons) unconsciously let the work they are doing become mechanical. Whenever a believer feels this way, he must search to see whether this kind of "mechanical work" is still needed by the Holy Spirit or if it has accomplished His purpose so that now God is calling His own vessels to go on. The servants of the Lord must know that what is begun as a spiritual work, a work of the Holy Spirit, may not always continue to be spiritual. Many works originally come from the Holy Spirit, but subsequently He, not man, may not need this work. Yet man still continues, thinking that what the Holy Spirit has begun must be spiritual forever. This will cause what is spiritual to become fleshly.

A spiritual believer will never see the anointing oil of the Holy Spirit in a mechanical work. God may no longer need a certain kind of work. If a believer continues to do that work because of the outward organization (which may not necessarily be visible), then he must draw on his own power, apart from the power of the Holy Spirit, as the supply to meet the demand of the work. When spiritual work needs to stop and the believer does not stop, he has to use his soulish strength and physical strength to work. In true spiritual work, the believer must completely reject his own mental power, natural ability,

gift, etc., before he can do a fruitful work for God. But a work which is not led by the Holy Spirit will fail immediately unless the believer exercises his mental power, natural ability, gift, etc.

A worker must be watchful to see on which part of his work the Holy Spirit is applying the ointment. Then he will know how to co-labor with the Holy Spirit and work according to the flow of the Holy Spirit's power. The responsibility of a believer is to fix his sight on the "flow" of the Holy Spirit and then follow that flow. If a work no longer has God's application of the ointment, if it is outside of the flow of the Holy Spirit, if it causes the worker to have a feeling of depression and obstruction, and if he is able to obtain the flow apart from this work, the work must be stopped. Those with spiritual discernment will discern faster than others. The question is: where is the "flow" of the Holy Spirit and where is it flowing? Any work which suppresses the life of the spirit, fails to support the expression of the life of the spirit, or hinders the Holy Spirit from flowing out in life and victory is a hindrance, no matter how it was in the beginning. If the work is not completely abolished, then either it must be corrected to let it obey the life in the spirit, or the relationship of the believer to this work must be changed.

In the spiritual experience of believers, there are many people who can serve as examples of being entangled in the "organization," both those with form and those without, until they have damaged their own life. At the start a servant of God receives the power of the spirit, and God greatly works. Many are saved and edified. Then there has to be a kind of "organization" or "method" to preserve the grace. Because of needs, requests, and maybe even commands, the servant will have to do the labor of "nourishing." Consequently, he is bound by the environment and can no longer follow the Holy Spirit freely. His spirit's life gradually recedes, but the outward work with organization still continues very prosperously. This is the story of failure for many persons.

Today among spiritual works there is a distressing situation in which the worker considers his work to be a heavy burden. Many people often say, "I am so busy with things and with work that I have only a little time for fellowship with the Lord. I hope that I will have an opportunity to stop the work temporarily to have a time for some spiritual nurturing, and then I will come back to work." This is really dangerous. Our work must be the result of the fellowship of our spirit with the Lord. All the work must be a joy; it must all be the overflow of the life of the spirit. If the work becomes a tiresome thing, separating the life of the spirit from the Lord Jesus, then this work must be stopped immediately. Since the flow of the Holy Spirit has changed course, one must find out where it is and follow it there.

The Holy Spirit's stopping of our work is very different from Satan's blocking of our work. Yet people often confuse the two. If God has said to stop and the believer still continues, then he will fall from working by the spirit to using his own mental power, ability, and effort as support. Even though he may resist the enemy, there is no anointing of the Holy Spirit. He cannot overcome because this battle is actually false. As soon as a believer sees that there is a blockage in the nature of the spirit, then he should discern whether in fact this comes from God or from the enemy. If the blockage is from the enemy, then he can resist the enemy in the spirit and go forward together with God through prayer, releasing his own spirit. If this is not the case, God will cause the believer's spirit to be more oppressed and to feel heavy laden and without freedom if he goes forward.

Therefore, at the present time the servants of God must get rid of all the work which God has not given, the work which he should have left long ago, the monopolizing work, the work which does not come from the Holy Spirit, the work which suppresses the spirit, the work which causes the believer to depart from the spirit, and the work which may be good, but which keeps the believer from being more noble.