

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE LAWS OF THE SPIRIT

A believer must learn to know the sense of the spirit because this is the first condition of walking according to the spirit. If he does not know what is the sense of the spirit and the feeling of the soul, he will not be able to walk according to the spirit. When we are hungry, we know that we must eat. When we are cold, we know that we should put on clothes. Our senses tell us our needs and demands. A man must be able to interpret the senses in his body before he will know how to meet its needs with material things. In the same way, a believer must learn to know the senses in his spirit—what they mean, what their demands are, and how to meet their demands. Only when a believer knows the senses of his spirit can he walk according to the spirit.

There are a few things concerning the laws of the spirit which we must know. Because we do not understand the laws of the spirit and the importance of the senses of the spirit, many times when the spirit expresses its desires, we are still ignorant of them. Since we fail to identify the many things that come from the spirit as being spiritual, the spirit loses its place in our daily life. After we know that the spirit has the function of the intuition, fellowship, and conscience, we must still learn to know its activities and how to walk according to this spirit. After we have been filled with the Holy Spirit, our spirit will surely become very active. If we then ignore it, we will suffer loss. It is very important to have a habit of examining the moving of the spirit. We should know the activities of our spirit more than the activities of our mind.

### THE WEIGHT OF THE SPIRIT

The spirit should be kept in a very free condition. It should constantly be light, as though soaring in the air. Only then will life grow and the work go on unhindered. For this reason, a believer must know the meaning of spiritual weight. Many times he feels that his spirit is suppressed and not free; a thousand pounds of weight seem to press upon him. When he searches for a reason for such weight, he may not find any. Furthermore, many times this weight creeps in suddenly upon a believer without his even noticing it. This weight is the enemy's means of suppressing spiritual believers; it takes away their joy and lightness so that they can no longer work with the Holy Spirit, and consequently, they lose their spiritual effectiveness. If believers do not understand the source of this weight and the meaning of the suppression in their spirit, they will not know how to deal with it in order to immediately recover their spirit to a state of normalcy.

Believers may wonder about the cause of such feelings. They may think that this is something natural or accidental. They may heedlessly allow their spirit to be suppressed. Many times believers ignore such weight and continue with their work, only to find that it becomes worse and worse. They do not realize that the enemy is playing tricks on them with the weight. Many times, God wants to use these believers, but they are not able to fulfill God's work because of this weight. Under this suppression, spiritual senses become very dull. This is why Satan and his evil spirits concentrate their efforts on applying weight to the believers' spirit and on taking away their freedom. Unfortunately, many believers do not realize that this weight comes from Satan. Even if they know, they do not reject it; they allow it to remain.

If believers carry this weight around with them, they will fail. If they find themselves with this weight in the morning and do not immediately remove it, they will be defeated

the entire day. A free spirit is the basis for victory. We must have a perfectly unbound spirit before we can battle with the enemy and live out God's life. If there is any pressure in a believer's spirit, he will lose his power of discernment and the genuine leading from God. When the spirit is suppressed, the mind is affected, and when the mind fails to work, everything stops or runs into error.

Hence, once you experience pressure or weight in your spirit, it is very important for you to immediately deal with it. You must never allow this condition to continue. If you allow it to continue, you will suffer, and the weight will become heavier and heavier. If you do not try to remove it, you will become accustomed to it after a period of time and not try to remove it at all. Subconsciously this weight will become part of your life. You will find that all spiritual things appear burdensome, and you will find it hard to go on in the spiritual journey. If you do not deal with such weight the first time, it will come back more easily the next time. The way to deal with it is to immediately stop what you are doing and take care of the demand of the spiritual senses. You should immediately reject this weight with your will and refuse it through the exercise of your spirit. Sometimes you have to speak a word to oppose this weight. Sometimes you have to reject it in prayer by the exercise of spiritual strength. If you do this, the evil spirits will not be able to weigh down your spirit.

However, another necessary step is to remove the cause of this weight. If the cause is not removed, the weight will remain. Hence, while you are rejecting the work of the enemy, you should, at the same time, reject the cause of the enemy's work. If you do this, you will claim back the ground that you have given to the enemy. If you have the power of discernment, you will see that you have failed because you did not cooperate with God at certain times and in certain matters. When this happens, the enemy gains an opportunity to oppress you with weight. This ground must be reclaimed. You must reject the cause of the enemy's work which comes as a result of your failures. If you do this, the enemy will flee away.

## **THE BLOCKAGE OF THE SPIRIT**

The spirit requires the soul and the body to be the organs for its expression. The spirit is like the lady of the house, and the steward and servant must carry out the lady's wishes. The spirit is also like electricity, and there must be a filament before it can express its light. If the soul and body are attacked by the evil spirits and become abnormal, the spirit will be blocked and have no outlets. The enemy knows the importance of the spirit. He often works in a believer's soul and body, causing them to lose their function so that the spirit no longer has an organ for its expression. By this, the spirit loses its victorious position.

At such times, the mind may come under attack and become confused. The emotion may feel lonely and sad, and the will may feel tired and lifeless, unable to direct the person. The body may feel very weak or somewhat lazy. If the believers' soul and body are attacked, and if they do not oppose it right away, their spirit will be blocked; they will not be able to fight vigorously with the enemy and maintain their victorious ground.

Once a believer's spirit is blocked, he loses his vigor. He will appear shy or withdrawn, and he will not want to do anything in public. He will prefer to retreat to the rear of the battle line, and he will not want to expose himself. He may think that this is an enlightenment for him, but actually this is a blockage of his spirit. When he reads the Bible, he does not seem to have much energy. When he prays, he does not seem to have

any words to say. When he considers his spiritual work and experience, they seem meaningless and even, at times, silly. When he preaches, he does not sense any result and feels that he is only going through the motions. If this condition persists, the believer will come under further attack and find himself choked and muffled. This will continue unless God intervenes through other men or through his own prayer. If a believer does not have the proper knowledge, he will become very bewildered. Usually he does not try to search for the reason, but instead allows it to go on. Strictly speaking, every spiritual experience and feeling has a cause to it. We should study it carefully and not allow it to remain in us indefinitely.

Such an experience happens when there is a blockage of the spirit. The soul and body outside the spirit have been locked up, and the spirit has no chance to express itself. Satan has imprisoned the spirit and locked it up in a dark room so that the soul no longer has the leading of the spirit. Once the thing that blocks the spirit is removed, the believer will find the outlets cleared, and he will recover his former lightness.

It is very important for a believer at such times to exercise his will to speak aloud. He should speak words of rebuke against the enemy, and he should speak out with a loud voice the victory of the cross and the defeat of the enemy. He should single-mindedly oppose the enemy's work in his soul and body. The will must stand behind a person's words and actively reject all blockages. Prayer is another way. Prayer is often the way to remove the blockages. But at these times, one has to pray out loud. The best kind of prayer at such a time is to call on the victorious name of the Lord Jesus and withstand all the attacks of the enemy. One should also exercise his spirit and channel its strength to break open a way to come out.

## **THE POISONING OF THE SPIRIT**

A believer's spirit can become poisoned by evil spirits. This is what the fiery darts of the enemy do. He can shoot his darts directly into a believer's spirit. He can shoot sorrow, sadness, suffering, grief, and heartbreak into a believer's spirit, causing him to have a "sorrowful spirit" (1 Sam. 1:15). "But a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Prov. 18:14). Hence, this greatly affects a person. When a believer feels sorrowful, he thinks he is feeling sorrowful, considering this sorrow to be very natural. He does not try to find out its cause nor does he try to oppose it at all. He accepts everything that comes to him silently and without any objection. We have to remember that this is very dangerous. We can never accept a thought carelessly or allow any feeling to come into us. If we want to walk according to the spirit, we have to be watchful in everything; we must study all our thoughts and feelings and find out where they come from.

Sometimes Satan causes our spirit to become hard, stubborn, narrow, selfish, wild, and disobedient. Consequently, the spirit is not able to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and carry out God's will. We will lose all of our love for men and all of our gentleness, sympathy, and considerations for the weaknesses of others. When this happens, the Holy Spirit cannot use us to any great extent; we will have lost the Lord's broadness and set up a boundary for ourselves.

Sometimes the enemy puts an unforgiving spirit into the believers. This is the most frequent poison that believers take in. This probably accounts for the majority of the cases of failure in spiritual believers. This kind of poison, such as fastidiousness and vengeance, is the most deadly poison to the spiritual life. Even after a believer has suffered from this poison, most of the time he will still not be clear about what

happened or realize that this poison came from Satan. Instead, he thinks that he hates others and that this cannot be removed.

Sometimes Satan causes believers to become narrow. He will cause believers to set a boundary for themselves and separate themselves from others. If believers do not have the concept of the church being the Body of Christ, instead making their own little group their foremost concern, it is a sign that their spirit has dwindled and become narrow. A spiritual believer considers God's business as his own business and the whole church as the object of his love. If his spirit is open, the river of life will flow everywhere. But if he becomes narrow, he will frustrate God's work and minimize his own usefulness. If our spirit is not big enough to include all of God's children, it means that our spirit has been poisoned.

Sometimes Satan causes the believers' spirit to become proud. In this way they become boastful, self-respecting, and self-esteeming. Satan causes the believers to think that they are not destitute, that they are somewhat important, and that they have some worth in God's work. This kind of spirit is also a great cause for the believers' failures. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).

The evil spirits inject such things together with other poisons into the believers' spirit. If the believers do not oppose these things immediately, they will quickly turn into things of the flesh. If believers know how to live in the spirit, these things will only be Satan's poison at the beginning; they will not have an opportunity to become a sin of the flesh. However, if believers do not oppose them, subconsciously accepting them instead, they will soon turn into sins of the flesh.

If the spirit is poisoned, and the poison is not quickly dealt with, it will turn into sins in the spirit. Sins in the spirit are more serious than any other sins. "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? But turning, He rebuked them and said, You do not know of what kind of spirit you are" (Luke 9:54-55). The kind of spirit we have is very important. Many times our spirit is stirred up by Satan, and we do not know it. Once the spirit errs, everything else errs.

When we consider the experience of the two disciples, we can see that a wrong spirit is very easily detected in our words. However, the words probably do not reveal as much as one's tone of voice. Many times the words may be right, but the tone is wrong. If we want to overcome, we have to take care of the tone in our speaking. Once evil spirits touch our spirit, our tone will lose its gentleness. All harsh voices, rash voices, and sharp voices do not come from the Holy Spirit. Rather, they are a sign that the ones with these voices have already been stirred up by Satan's poisons.

How do we ordinarily speak? When we speak about others, can we speak without any sense of condemnation? Perhaps what we say is true, but a spirit of criticism, condemnation, wrath, and jealousy may be lurking behind truthful words. We should speak the truth in love. If our spirit is pure and meek, we can speak the truth. But if a spirit of condemnation is lurking behind our words, we are committing a sin. Sin is not only an act, but also a condition. The spirit behind all of our actions is very important. Many times we can be working for God or man and committing sins at the same time. The work may be done, but a spirit of dishonesty, unwillingness, or grudge is hidden behind it.

We should maintain our spirit in a sweet and tender condition. Our spirit should be clean and pure. Do we consider a wrong spirit a sin? When does the enemy attack our spirit? When is our spirit poisoned? If we know about sins, will we remove them humbly? When we detect a hardening of our tone, we should immediately stop and not go on. We should immediately say to others, "I would rather say the same words with a clean spirit. I would rather oppose the enemy." If we are not willing to tell our brothers that we are wrong, our spirit retains its sins. Believers should learn to guard their spirit from the provocation of the enemy and to guard their spirit in sweetness and gentleness.

Ordinarily a believer should have the shield of faith for the quenching of the flaming darts of the evil one. This means that he should exercise a living faith to oppose the attacks of the enemy and should trust in God's protection. Faith is our shield; it is not our extracting pliers. It is for quenching the fiery darts, not for pulling them out.

If believers are hit by the darts, they should immediately remove the cause of the fiery darts and take up an opposing stand. They should immediately reject everything from the enemy and pray for God's cleansing.

### **THE DEPRESSION OF THE SPIRIT**

Believers become depressed in their spirit mostly when they turn inward to look at themselves. It may also be due to the fact that the soul-life is still functioning and has not yet been replaced. As a result, they consider all the experiences as their own. It may also be caused by the invasion of the power of darkness from the outside, or even by self-centered prayer and worship. If the believers' spirit is turned inward instead of outward, God's power will immediately stop. If they do not deal with this introspection immediately, they will quickly find themselves surrounded by the soul.

Sometimes the spirit will indulge in the soul. This happens when believers are deceived by the evil spirits. The evil spirits give believers bodily feelings and all kinds of strange, happy experiences. If the believers are not alert, they will think that these things are from God, and they will subconsciously live in the world of feelings and drag the spirit into the place of the soul.

Sometimes believers are deceived, and their spirits are depressed because they do not understand the position Christ holds. The Holy Spirit abides in the believers for the purpose of unveiling to them the Christ that is sitting on the throne. The books of Acts, Ephesians, and Hebrews clearly depict Christ's position in heaven today. The believers' spirit is joined to the heavenly Christ, but in their ignorance, they may turn inward to look for Christ. They may try to be joined to the Christ within them. In this way, their spirit cannot be uplifted above the clouds, and they are depressed and fall into the realm of the soul.

In short, these activities keep the believers in a life of feeling rather than a life in the spirit. The believers should realize that before they were spiritual, they did not live practically in the spirit, and there was no need for much counterfeit work from the enemy. But once they have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit infused into their spirit, a new world seems to open up before them. It is a world that they have never known before. The danger lies here. Satan's work is to prevent the believers from living a life in the spirit, because such a life is very damaging to him. His tactic is to entice and deceive the believers with the senses of the soul and the body, causing them to think that these are spiritual experiences to indulge in.



Many believers have entered into a spiritual living. Yet because they do not understand the laws of the spirit, they fail. Satan will give believers all kinds of physical feelings and supernatural experiences. If believers depend on outward, supernatural things or spiritual experiences in their senses, they will suffer many hindrances in the spiritual life within their spirit. When this happens, believers will live in the outward soul or the body which frustrates the innermost spirit from working together with God. Under such circumstances, the soul and the body will surely be uplifted once again; they will gain ascendancy, and the spirit will eventually be completely submerged.

When the spirit is depressed, its senses are suppressed. This is the reason many spiritual believers often feel that their spirit is gone. When the soul and the body occupy too prominent a position, and when the whole person lives by the senses, the soul and the body will have an acute feeling of suppression, suffering, and conflict. When this happens, man's senses will supersede the work of the spirit, and the senses of the spirit will be buried under the strong feelings of the soul and the body. As a result, all spiritual living and work will come to a standstill. If this continues for a long time, the person will become completely fallen and may even become possessed by the evil spirits.

Therefore, we have to reject everything that kills the spirit's senses. We should reject uncontrollable laughter, deep grief, and all of the intense signals from the body. The body should be completely calm. It is even wrong to feel supernatural things and to be overly sensitive towards natural things. These things will only cause the mind to walk according to the body, not according to the spirit. We should not allow anything to stop us from knowing the smallest senses in the spirit.

Once the spirit is depressed, the soul surrounds the spirit and controls the spirit. Hence, a believer must learn to maintain his spirit in a constant outward posture; it should never turn itself inward. A believer should realize that if his spirit is not turned outward in an assault on Satan, Satan will attack his spirit instead and cause his spirit to become depressed. Only when the believers' spirit is flowing outward will the Holy Spirit spread His own life to others through their spirit. If believers turn to themselves and suppress their spirit, the flow of the Holy Spirit is immediately blocked. The outflow and gushing forth of the Holy Spirit is carried out through the believers' spirit. If the believers turn inward and suppress their spirit, the life of the Holy Spirit will not be able to flow out.

Hence, believers have to know the reason for any depression in their spirit, and they should know how to recover their spirit to its original position. Once a believer detects any leakage in his spirit, he should realize that his spirit is sick and that he should seek a remedy at once.

## **THE BURDEN OF THE SPIRIT**

There is a difference between the burden of the spirit and the weight of the spirit. The weight of the spirit is from Satan, and its purpose is to cause believers to suffer; Satan uses the weight to suppress them. The burden of the spirit, however, is from God. Its purpose is to make known His will and secure the believers' cooperation. The weight of the spirit has no other purpose except to suppress. As such, it is useless and fruitless. The burden of the spirit is a burden from God, and its goal is to cause men to work, intercede, and preach for God. Such a burden is purposeful, reasonable, and profitable. Believers must differentiate between the burden in their spirit and the weight in their spirit.

Satan does not give any burden to the believers; he only surrounds the believers' spirit and oppresses the believers with the weight. Satan's weight causes the believers' spirit to be bound and their minds to stop functioning. A person who bears a burden only has to bear the burden itself; but a person who is oppressed is bound in his whole being. Once the power of darkness comes to a believer, he loses his freedom immediately. However, a burden from God is not like this. No matter how heavy God's burden is, it will never be so heavy that a person cannot pray. The freedom of prayer will never be lost under any kind of burden. But the weight imposed by the enemy takes away the believers' freedom in prayer. In fact, except for some wrestling and withstanding prayers, this weight cannot be removed. God's burden is removed once we pray. But this is not true with the weight from the enemy. Moreover, the weight of the spirit creeps in secretly, while the burden in the spirit is the result of the Holy Spirit's work in our spirit. The weight of the spirit is painful and suppresses the believers' life; the burden in the spirit is joyful because it cooperates with God (cf. Matt. 11:30). (Of course, the flesh does not feel joyful about the spirit's burden. Furthermore, this burden is also painful if one does not meet its demands.)

All real work begins first with a burden in the spirit. (Of course, when we do not have a burden in the spirit, there is the need to exercise the mind.) When God wants us to do something, say something, or pray for something, He first gives us a burden in our spirit. If we know the laws of the spirit, we will not rashly continue on with the work in our hands, allowing the burden to become heavier and heavier. (Perhaps when we allow the matter to go on for a long time, the sense for the burden may be lost.) We should drop everything and study the burden. After we understand the meaning of the burden, we should walk according to what we know. When everything is accomplished, the burden will be gone from us.

Ordinarily, a believer's spirit must be free and unsuppressed before it can receive burdens from God. Only a free spirit can sense the move of the Holy Spirit. A spirit that has been filled with weight is no longer keen in its intuition and cannot be a good vessel anymore. Many times a believer receives a burden from God, yet he cannot carry out the requirements of the burden. As a result his spirit suffers for many days from the burden, and he is not able to receive any fresh burden from God. Hence, it is very important to find out the meaning of a burden in prayer by the Holy Spirit and through the exercise of the mind.

Many times the burden in the spirit is for us to pray (Col. 4:12). Actually, we cannot pray more than our burden. To continue to pray without a burden is surely ineffective, and it comes from the self-will. The burden of prayer that comes from the spirit can only be relieved through prayer. Actually, all burdens are this way. If God burdens our spirit with a certain burden, we can only relieve the burden in our spirit by fulfilling what God wants us to do, either through prayer or through proclaiming His message. Only when we have a burden in our spirit to pray can we pray in the Holy Spirit, and only then can we pray with groanings which cannot be uttered. When there is a burden in our spirit to pray, nothing can alleviate this burden and nothing can release us except prayer. When the things we pray for are accomplished, the burden is immediately lifted from us.

Many times believers have accumulated too many burdens of prayer in their spirit. When they begin to pray, it seems to be a very painful task. But the more the believers pray, the more their spirit will say amen. We must try our best to thoroughly pray out what is burdening us in our spirit, until the burden is fully removed from us. The more we express our life in our prayers as well as everything we have, the more comfortable

we will become. But there is a temptation in this kind of prayer to stop praying before the burden is gone. Most believers think that as soon as they are somewhat relieved in their spirit, their prayers are answered. Actually this is the time when proper spiritual work begins. If we turn away to do other things at this juncture, the spiritual work will suffer.

Believers must not be misled to think that all spiritual works are happy and joyful; nor should they think that once there is some kind of burden, they have lost their spiritual experience. It is very unfortunate that believers do not realize that the burden in the spirit is the source of real spiritual work. Only those who suffer in this way for God and men truly do not live for themselves. All the other ones who seek for joy in their feelings and who are afraid of taking up any burden for the church are living for themselves and are soulish. Hence, when God gives us a burden, we should not think that we have fallen or that we have committed some errors. Satan loves to see us think this way, for this kind of thinking spares him from our attacks. We should not misunderstand ourselves. If we listen to Satan and think that there is something wrong with us, we will come under his accusations even more and suffer.

Genuine spiritual work is an assault on Satan and a travail in birth for the believers. There is indeed no joy to this! This requires one to die to the self in the deepest way. For this reason, no soulish believer can truly participate in spiritual work. Having a happy feeling all day long is not a proof of a believer's spirituality. The right kind of believers advance with God without caring for their own feelings. Many times when believers are burdened in their spirit to fight with the enemy, they prefer to be alone and cut off all fellowship with the world, so that they can concentrate in their warfare with the enemy. At the end of this warfare, it is difficult to find any trace of a smile on their face. Hence, all spiritual believers should welcome the burdens from the Lord.

Believers must know the laws of the spirit and the way to cooperate with God. Otherwise, they will neglect such burdens and consequently suffer. Soon they even lose their burdens and do not participate in the most glorious co-labor with God. Therefore, every time there is a burden in the spirit, they should immediately find out what the burden is in prayer. If it is a call to fight, they should fight. If it is a call to preach the gospel, they should preach the gospel. If it is a call to prayer, they should pray. They should seek to work together with God. They should move the old burdens out of the way, so that the new burdens can come.

## **THE EBBING OF THE SPIRIT**

This means that God's life and power can ebb away in the believers' spirit like the ebbing away of the tide. When believers are soulish, they consider it as a spiritual peak when they feel God's presence in their feelings making them feel happy. If they feel dry and restless, they think that their spiritual life is at its worst. However, this is only what they feel in their feelings; it does not reflect the real condition of their spiritual life.

Of course, there are times when the spiritual life is indeed low. This is different from the times when a person is in the feeling of the soul. After a believer is filled with the Holy Spirit, he will continue to advance for a time. But soon, he will gradually have setbacks. It will not happen suddenly. This is the difference between the ebbing away in feeling and a setback in reality. In the former case it happens suddenly; in the latter case it happens gradually. In the latter case, a person feels that the life and power within his spirit, which he once received, have suffered a gradual setback. At such times he loses



the joy, peace, and power in the spirit that he once had. Day by day, he becomes weaker and weaker. Soon he feels that he has lost all taste for fellowship with God; he finds it meaningless to read the Bible, and no message or any special Scripture moves his heart. Even if he is touched by something, it is not as intense as before. Prayer becomes dry, tasteless, and meaningless, and he seems to have nothing to pray about. He finds no joy in testifying, and there is no more outflow as before. The life is not as strong as before, nor as exciting, soaring, and joyful. Everything seems to have subsided.

There is indeed ebbing and rising with the tide. But is there an ebbing and rising in our spirit as well when it only has God's life and power? God's life does not ebb; it is forever flowing. His life is not like the tide of the sea which rises and falls; it is like a river which flows forever with living water (John 7:38). God's life within us is not like the tide which must ebb after a certain time. The source of life within us is God; He never changes, and with Him there is no shadow of turning. Hence, the life in our spirit should flow unceasingly and should continue to overflow and spread.

If a believer feels that his life has ebbed away, he should realize that his life is not ebbing away; it has merely stopped flowing. He should realize that this ebbing is absolutely unnecessary. We should never be deceived by Satan to think that as long as a man lives in his flesh, he can never again be filled with God's life continuously. God's life is a river of living water within us. If there is no hindrance, it flows on forever. It is possible for believers to have a lasting, flowing experience. Any kind of ebbing is unnecessary and abnormal.

Hence, the question is not one of the ebbing away of the spiritual life but of doing something to make it rise again. The present need is not a question of filling the river but one of facilitating the flow. The river of life remains in the believers, but it is blocked. The inlet is still open, but the outlet is stopped. Because there is no flow, the water of life cannot go out. As soon as the outlet is cleared, the water of life will flow out unceasingly. Hence, a believer does not need more life but more outflow of life.

Once a believer feels that his spiritual life appears to be ebbing away, he should find out where it is blocked. Satan will make you feel that your spiritual life has regressed. Others may feel that you have lost your spiritual power. You yourself may even think that you have committed some great sin. This may be true, but it may not necessarily be true. Actually, the real reason is that many believers do not know how to cooperate with God and fulfill God's condition for having an unceasing flow. Ignorance is the greatest cause of such a phenomenon. Therefore, a believer should immediately pray, meditate, test, and search. You should wait on God and ask the Spirit to reveal the reason for the "ebbing away." You should be living and find out if you have failed to fulfill some conditions for a continual flow of the spiritual life which lead to such an "ebbing away."

Not only should you acknowledge that you have setbacks—an important step in itself—but you should actively seek the reason for such setbacks. Although the propositions of Satan, other men, and yourself are all unreliable, they are worth some consideration because sometimes they can be true. Once you find the reason, you should immediately repudiate it. Do not imagine that spiritual life flows out spontaneously. If you do not remove the reason for the blockage, the flow will not resume.

Hence, every time there is a spiritual "ebbing away," we should immediately find the reason through prayer and meditation. We should understand the law for God's life to flow and repudiate all the works of the enemy. If we do this, life will flow again, and we

will be invigorated once more. The spirit will become more powerful than before and strengthened to storm the strongholds of the enemy.

## **THE NEGLIGENCE OF RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SPIRIT**

The human spirit is like an electric light. When it comes into contact with the Holy Spirit, it becomes full of light. When it is detached from the Spirit, it immediately becomes dark. The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord (Prov. 20:27). God's goal is to fill it with light. Yet many times a believer's spirit becomes darkened. This is because his spirit has lost contact with the Holy Spirit, and as a result it becomes darkened. If we want to know whether a believer's spirit has been isolated from the Holy Spirit, all we need to see is whether the spirit has lost its light.

We have said that God's Holy Spirit dwells in man's spirit. Man cooperates with the Holy Spirit through his spirit. When the human spirit deviates from its normal condition, it becomes isolated from the Holy Spirit and loses its light. It is very important for a believer to maintain his spirit in a healthy condition, so that it can cooperate with the Holy Spirit. If the spirit is troubled by outward circumstances, it immediately becomes useless; it is not be able to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and becomes darkened.

All of the above situations can cause the spirit to neglect its responsibility and fail to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Once the spirit has neglected its responsibility, victory becomes impossible. If a believer feels that his spirit is gone when he wakes up in the morning, the enemy may make him think that he has worked too hard the night before and that his body is tired. If believers are not on the alert, they will allow their spirit to neglect its responsibility. They will find that they have no strength to withstand the temptations of the day and to fulfill the work of the day. They should immediately look into the matter, realizing that their body should not affect their spirit; rather, their spirit should be living and strong, controlling their body. After they understand this, they should confess that their spirit has neglected its duty and is under the attack of the enemy. At such times they should immediately attempt to recover their former condition. If they do not do this, they will fail when they go out to meet others. When our spirit neglects its duty in the morning, we must not allow it to continue this way throughout the day, because this is the way of defeat.

After the believers realize that their spirit has neglected its duty, they should immediately reject all the works of Satan and the cause of all his works. If it is an attack from the enemy, their spirit will be free once they repudiate the attack. But if there is some other reason for the attack, meaning that the believers have given the enemy some ground, they should study the reason for the attacks and remove its ground accordingly. This is very much related to the believers' past history. They should consider how the enemy has attacked their spirit and consider their environment, family, relatives, children, and careers. They should pray over these things one by one. If they feel that they should pray for something, and while praying feel somewhat relieved in their spirit, they should realize that they have identified the cause of the attack. They should then remove the cause before God. After they pray, they should be free, and their spirit should resume its functions. Sometimes the spirit's negligence of duty occurs when believers leave their spirit alone and do not exercise control over it or direct it in the right track. "The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" (1 Cor. 14:32). Those who "follow their own spirit" are "the foolish prophets" (Ezek. 13:3). This is very important. If believers do not exercise their will to control their spirit, to prevent it from being too much or too little, and if they do not maintain a cooperation between their spirit and the

Holy Spirit, their spirit has neglected its duty. Believers should realize that the human spirit can become wild. This is why Proverbs says that there is a "haughty spirit" (Prov. 16:18). Man's spirit can act independently of the Holy Spirit. If a believer does not exercise any control over his spirit and make it subject to the Holy Spirit, it can act independently. Hence, a believer must be on the alert all the time and not allow his spirit to deviate from God's track or from a quiet fellowship with God; otherwise, he will no longer be able to cooperate with God.

Sometimes, the negligence of duty in the spirit is caused by a hardening of the believer's spirit. God needs a tender spirit for His will to be expressed. If the spirit is haughty, self-assured, and not humble, the work of the Holy Spirit will be hindered. Only a yielding spirit will fulfill the Holy Spirit's will. A believer must have a willing spirit (Exo. 35:21), and he must be willing to respond to the will of the Holy Spirit within the shortest period of time. A believer's spirit must be very sensitive to be able to sense the small voice of the Holy Spirit and respond immediately. If there is the slightest stubbornness in a believer's spirit, he will not be able to carry out God's will and hear the voice of the Holy Spirit within his spirit. Hence, believers must maintain their spirit in a pliable condition and always follow the tender sense in their spirit. This is what the apostle meant when he said, "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thes. 5:19). Believers should be careful to follow all the work, feeling, and sense of the spirit. If they do this, the sense of their spirit will become keener and keener. Moreover, God will make His will known to them.

If believers desire to walk according to the spirit, they should know when their spirit has become negligent in its duty, no longer cooperating with the Holy Spirit. They should also know why it has neglected its duty. They should guard their spirit watchfully and keep it in constant simplicity and calmness. Then they can fellowship with God and oppose all the distractions from the enemy and from themselves which take away its peaceful contact with God.

## **THE CONDITION OF THE SPIRIT**

In summary, a believer must understand all the laws of the spirit before he can walk according to the spirit. If he is not watchful, and does not cooperate with God, he will become fallen. The most important law of the spirit is to examine the condition of the spirit. An examination of the condition of the spirit is the central issue that we have spoken about in the above discussion.

A believer should understand the condition of his own spirit. He should know the normal condition of the spirit and when the spirit has lost its normalcy. The spirit should rule over man's soul and body; it should have the highest preeminence and be the most powerful part. A believer should check to see if this is indeed the condition of his spirit. He should know if his spirit has lost its normalcy and is being agitated through warfare or the environment. There are generally four kinds of conditions with the spirit:

- (1) The spirit is oppressed and suffers a setback.
- (2) The spirit is calm, steady, and in the proper position.
- (3) The spirit is agitated and forced to overreact.

(4) The spirit is defiled and has become sick (2 Cor. 7:1); it has given ground to sin.

A believer must at least know these four conditions of his spirit, and he must know how to deal with them. Many times through his own carelessness or through the attacks of the enemy, a believer's spirit is "pushed aside," and becomes depressed. At such times, he loses his heavenly, bright, and victorious position and becomes cold, crippled, and flattened. The spirit can become depressed through sorrow or a hundred other reasons, losing its soaring joy. When the spirit is oppressed, it falls below the line of normalcy.

Sometimes the spirit can also be agitated and moved beyond its proper position. A believer can be excited in the soul and become ecstatic to the extent that his spirit is agitated and loses its calmness. Sometimes a believer follows the "creaturely vigor" to the extent that he has an "unrestrained spirit." Uncontrollable laughter and many other reasons can cause the spirit to become wild and uncontrollable. Prolonged warfare with the enemy can also result in overactivity of the spirit. Satan can cause a believer's spirit to become overstretched during or after Satan's conflict with him to the extent that he cannot stop his spirit's activity and hold his composure. Satan can give believers a strange kind of happiness or many other things that cause their spirit to act beyond the control of their mind or will. When this happens, believers are no longer able to guard themselves, and they fail.

Sometimes, the spirit is neither too high nor too low, but it is defiled. Sometimes the defilement appears as an attitude in one's spirit like stubbornness and disobedience. Sometimes it appears as sins in the spirit like pride and jealousy. At still other times, it appears as a mixture of soulish activities in the spirit like natural love, feelings, and thoughts. Once the spirit is defiled, it has to be cleansed (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 John 1:9).

If a believer desires to walk according to the spirit, he must understand his spirit's condition. Is his spirit in a calm and proper condition, or is it in a position that is too low, too high, or defiled? He should know how to uplift his suppressed spirit so that it will match the standard of the Holy Spirit. He should know how to exercise his will to stop the hyperactive spirit and turn it back to its normal condition. He should know how to cleanse his defiled spirit so that he can once again work with God.