

**THE SPIRITUAL MAN:
VOLUME ONE**

BY

WATCHMAN NEE

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EXPLANATORY NOTES

The *Spiritual Man* is a translation of the only book of any substantial size which brother Watchman Nee himself ever wrote. At the time of writing it he felt this work might be his last contribution to the church, although since then God has graciously overruled. Long after the book's initial publication in Chinese our brother once was heard to express the thought that it should not be reprinted because, it being such a "perfect" treatment of its subject, he was fearful lest the book become to its readers merely a manual of principles and not a guide to experience as well. But in view of the urgent need among the children of God today for help on spiritual life and warfare, and knowing our brother as one who is always open to God's way and most desirous to serve His people with all that God has given him, we conclude that he would doubtless permit it to be circulated in English. Hence this translation.

Translations used. The Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible has been used throughout the text unless otherwise indicated. Additional translations where employed are denoted by the following abbreviations:

Amplified - Amplified Old Testament

ASV - American Standard Version (1901)

AV - Authorised Version (King James)

Darby - J. N. Darby, *The Holy Scriptures. a New Translation*

Young's - Young's Literal Translation

SOULICAL AND SOULISH

The adjectives "soulical" and "soulish" have been used to convey distinctly different meanings. "Soulical" as herein employed pertains to those proper, appropriate, legitimate, or natural qualities, functions, or expressions of man's soul which the Creator intended from the very beginning for the soul uniquely to possess and manifest. "Soulish" appears in these pages to describe that man *in toto* who is so governed by the soulical part of his being that his whole life takes on the character and expression of the soul.

PREFACE ONE

To the Lord Whom I serve I offer my heartfelt thanks, for He has given me the privilege of writing this book. I had always hoped another more capable would undertake this work, yet it pleases the Lord to call me to it. If the choice were left to me I should be the last of all to write; for I have the least desire to do such a book. My hesitation lies not in withdrawal from duty but rather in the realisation that such a book touching on the way of spiritual life and the stratagem of spiritual warfare is surely beyond the possibility of one whose experience of the Lord has been less than ten years long. The Bible does permit a believer to relate his experience; the Holy Spirit even leads one to do so; how much better though if such experiences as “caught up into the third heaven” be mentioned after “fourteen years.” Now I do not have a “third heaven” experience, neither have I received great revelation, but I have learned through His grace to follow the Lord in the small things of the day. In this work, therefore, my attempt is but to impart to the children of God that which I have received from the Lord in these years.

It was about four years ago that I felt called to write such a book. At that time I was resting from physical weakness in a small but by the river, praying and reading the Word. I felt the urgent need for a book based on the Word and on experience - which would give God’s children a clear understanding of spiritual life in order that the Holy Spirit might use it in leading the saints onward and in delivering them from groping in darkness. It was then that I knew I was commissioned by the Lord to undertake this task. I began to compose the chapters which discuss the differentiation of spirit, soul and body, a chapter on the body, and also the first part of the chapter dealing with soul life. But I soon discontinued writing. I had many other claims upon my time besides this one. That was not the main deterrent, however, for I could still find opportunity to write. I lay down my pen chiefly because up to that time many truths were yet to be written which had not been fully proven in my experience. This lack I knew would lessen the value as well as the power of the book. I would prefer to learn more before the Lord and prove His truths through experience. What I wrote would then be spiritual realities instead of merely spiritual theories. Thus the work was suspended for three years.

I can say that during these three years I had the book daily in my heart. Although some might consider the publishing of this work long overdue, I could clearly see the hand of the Lord. Within these few years the truths contained in this book, especially those in the last volume, have liberated many from the power of darkness, demonstrating that we had touched spiritual reality. By the special grace of the Lord I was enabled to understand more of the purpose of God’s redemption in dividing the new and the old creations. I praise the Lord for that. The Lord also gave me opportunities to meet many of his choicest ones during my various travels. This increased my observation, knowledge and experience. In my contacts with people the Lord showed me not only what is genuinely lacking among His children but what is the revealed remedy in His Word as well. Let me therefore tell my readers that this is a manual on spiritual life, every point of which can be experimentally proven.

Due to my special experience in the physical body during these few years, it has been given me to know more of the reality of eternity and, likewise, the great debt I owe the

church of God. Thus I hoped I would be able to finish this book within a short period. Thanks to God the Father and to some of my friends in the Lord, I was provided with a quiet place for resting and writing. Within a few months I had finished Parts I through IV. Although I have not yet begun the other parts, I am sure God the Father will supply the necessary grace at the needed time.

Now that this volume is shortly to be published and the other volumes will soon follow, let me speak frankly: learning the truths in this book was not easy; writing them down was even harder. I may say that for two months I lived daily in the jaws of Satan. What battling! What withstanding! All my powers of spirit, soul and body were summoned to contend with hell. Such battles are now temporarily suspended, but more parts must be written. You who are Moses on the hill, please do not forget Joshua in the plain. I know the enemy hates this work deeply. He will try every means to prevent it from reaching people's hands and to hinder them from reading it. Oh, that you would not allow the enemy to succeed here.

This book, which will contain three volumes, is not written in sermonic or expository form. Differences occur in the length of treatment of various subjects and this the readers should notice. Although all volumes deal with spiritual life and warfare, some sections may lay more stress on spiritual life while others may lay more on spiritual warfare. The book as a whole is prepared to serve as a guide; hence its emphasis is principally a matter of how to walk in this way rather than that of persuading people initially to take this walk. It is written not so much to urge individuals to seek the spiritual way as to help those who are seeking to know the way. May all whose hearts are out to the Lord find help in its pages.

I am deeply aware that the spiritual life of the readers of this book may vary greatly. If you should therefore come to some points difficult to understand, please neither reject them nor try to fathom them mentally. Such truths should be reserved for more matured life. Upon re-reading that difficult part later (say after two weeks or a whole month), you may perhaps grasp it better. Nevertheless, this book deals wholly with spiritual life as an experience. In no other way can it be understood. What appears to be tasteless in the beginning may come to be most precious later. You will understand when you reach that stage. But is it necessary to wait until reaching that stage before understanding? If such were the case, what will be the use of this book! A great mystery surrounds the spiritual experience of a believer. The Lord always gives a foretaste of the outline of a deeper life before He leads him into the full experience of it. Many believers mistake their foretaste for the fullness, not realising that the Lord is just beginning to lead them in. The teaching in this book will meet the need of those who have tasted but not yet fully drunk.

One thing we must guard against: we should never use the knowledge we acquire from this book as an aid in analysing ourselves. If in God's light we see light, we shall know ourselves without losing our freedom in the Lord. But if all day long we analyse ourselves, dissecting our thoughts and feelings, it will hinder us from losing ourselves in Christ. Unless a believer is deeply taught by the Lord he will not be able to know himself. Introspection and self-consciousness are harmful to spiritual life.

It would be well to reflect upon God's redemptive design. God's purpose is that through the new life given us at the time of regeneration He might be able to deliver us

from (1) sin, (2) the natural, and (3) the supernatural, that is, the satanic force of evil in the unseen realm. These three steps of deliverance are necessary; none can be omitted. If a Christian limits God's redemptive work by being content with merely overcoming sin, he falls far short of the purpose of God. The natural life (the good self) must be overcome, and so too must the supernatural enemy. It certainly is well to overcome sin, but the work is not complete if the petty self and the supernatural evil are left unconquered. The cross can afford us such victory. I hope through God's grace I can emphasise these points as we go along.

Aside from the last Part of the concluding volume which will discuss the body, this book may be considered Biblical psychology. We base everything on the Bible and prove all by spiritual experience. The result of our findings, both through studying the Word and through experience, tells us that for every spiritual experience (for example, the new birth) there is a special change in our inward man. We conclude that the Bible divides man into three parts - spirit, soul and body. We shall see further how different are the functions and the realms of these three parts, particularly those of spirit and soul. In this connection, a few words need to be said concerning Part One of this first volume. The differentiation of spirit and soul as well as the difference in their functions are necessary knowledge to those who seek to grow in spiritual life. Only after knowing what is the spirit and what is spiritual can we walk according to the spirit. Because of the great lack of such teachings, I have attempted to explain in detail. To believers with some background this first Part will not present any difficulty to their understanding; but those who are unfamiliar with such a study need only remember the conclusions and may then proceed to the second Part. Part One, consequently, does not deal specifically with spiritual life; it merely supplies us with some necessary knowledge basic to spiritual life. This Part may be better understood if it is re-read after the entire book is first finished.

I am not the first to advocate the teaching of the dividing of spirit and soul. Andrew Murray once said that what the church and individuals have to dread is the inordinate activity of the soul with its power of mind and will. F. B. Meyer declared that had he not known about the dividing of spirit, and soul, he could not have imagined what his spiritual life would have been. Many others, such as Otto Stockmayer, Jessie Penn-Lewis, Evan Roberts, Madame Guyon, have given the same testimony. I have used their writings freely since we all have received the same commission from the Lord; therefore I have decided to forego notating their many references.¹

This book is written not only for the believers as such, but also to help those who are younger in the Lord's service than I. We who are responsible for the spiritual life of others ought to know from what and into what we lead them - from whence to where. If we help people, negatively, not to sin and, positively, to be zealous; will that be all the Lord wants us to do? Or is there perhaps something deeper? I personally feel the Bible has given a most definite judgment. God's purpose is that His children are to be delivered wholly from the old creation and are to enter fully into the new creation. No matter how the old creation may appear to man, it is utterly condemned by God. If we workers know what ought to be destroyed and what ought to be built, then we are not the blind leading the blind.

¹ Citations will be added where the direct quotations can be found. - Translator

New birth - receiving God's own life - is the starting point of all spiritual life. How useless it is if the end result of all our exhortation, persuasion, argument, explanation and study is but to induce some understanding in the mind, some determination in the will, some feeling in the emotion. It has not assisted people to receive God's life into their spirit. But if we who are responsible for preaching the gospel truly perceive that unless people receive God's life into the depths of their beings we have not done anything profitable, then what a drastic reformation will there be in our work! Indeed, such knowledge will bring us to the realisation that many who do profess to believe in the Lord Jesus have never actually done so. Tears, penitence, reform, zeal and labour: these are not the hallmarks of a Christian. Happy are we if we know that our responsibility is to bring man to receive God's uncreated life.

As I recall how the enemy has tried to binder me from learning the truths written in the last volume, I can not but be apprehensive that some, though possessing the book, will be hindered by Satan from reading it; or if they do read it, will be made to soon forget it. Therefore let me warn my readers: you should ask God to keep Satan from preventing your reading it. Pray as you read; turn what you read into prayer. Pray that God will cover you with the helmet of salvation lest you forget what you read or simply fill your mind with innumerable theories.

A few words to those who already possess the truths set forth in the following pages. If God has graciously liberated you from the flesh and the power of darkness, you, in turn, ought to bring these truths to others. So after you have digested the book thoroughly and the truths have become your own, will you gather a few saints together and teach them the truths. If it is too much to use the entire book, then one or two parts would be profitable. The hope is that the truths herein will not be left unnoticed. Even lending the book to others to read would be a profitable thing.

Now that this small treatise is in the Lord's hand, if He is pleased with it, may He bless it toward spiritual growth and spiritual victory in me as well as in many of my brothers and sisters. May the will of God be done. May His enemy be defeated. May our Lord Jesus soon return to reign. Amen.

Watchman Nee
Shanghai, June 4, 1927

PREFACE TWO

Most happy am I today for I have completed the last Part of the book. I recall when I wrote the earlier preface I had completed but the first four parts. With these last six now done I find I have much yet to share with my readers. Hence this second preface.

Many months have passed since I commenced writing this final portion of the book. I can truthfully say that during these months the burden of this work has been upon me daily. It is natural for the enemy to hate the spreading of God's truth. As a consequence I have been attacked and assaulted incessantly. Thanks be unto God, His grace has hitherto sustained me. Often I thought it would be impossible to continue writing because the pressure upon my spirit was too heavy and the stamina of my body too weak; yea, I even despaired of life itself. As often as I despaired, however, just as often was I strengthened by the God whom I serve, according to His promise and through the prayers of many. Today the task is finished and the burden is discharged. What comfort I now experience!

Today I reverently offer this book to our God. Since He has performed that which He began, my prayer before Him is that He may bless these pages to fulfil its God-given mission in His church. I am asking God to bless every reader that he may find the straight path and learn to follow the Lord perfectly. My spirit together with my prayer henceforth follows the outgoing of this work. May God use it according to His most excellent will.

Brethren, it is considered politic for a writer not to show too much enthusiasm for his own work, but I shall now proceed to disregard this human convention. I do this not because I wrote the book but because of the deposit of truth in the book. Had it been written by another I think I would be freer to draw people's attention to it. I must therefore beg your pardon for being beside myself. I know the importance of the truths herein contained and, according to the best of my knowledge of God's will, I feel they will meet the urgent need of this age. No matter how mistaken I may be, of one thing I am certain: I did not have the slightest intention of undertaking this task: I wrote only because I was commissioned by the Lord so to do. The truths in these pages are not mine; they were given me by God. Even when I was writing He blessed me with many new blessings.

I desire my readers to understand thoroughly that this work is in no way to be considered a treatise on the theory of spiritual life and warfare. I myself can testify that I have learned these truths through much suffering, trial and failure. It can almost be said that every one of these teachings has been branded with fire. And these words are not used lightly; they come from the depth of the heart. God knows from whence these truths do come.

When composing the volumes I did not attempt to group similar and related principles together. I have simply mentioned them as the need arose. Out of consideration for their extreme importance, I may have touched upon one truth or another many times, hoping the children of God would thereby better remember. Only through repetition will the truth be retained and only by reviewing will it be learned. "Therefore the word

of the Lord will be to them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little” (Isaiah 28:13).

I realise there are many apparent inconsistencies in the work, but the reader should remember that they are indeed apparent, not actual. Because this book treats of matters in the spiritual realm, there are bound to be many apparent theoretical contradictions. Spiritual things do often seem to be contradictory (2 Corinthians 4:8-9). However, these all find their perfect harmony in experience. Hence, though there are places which seem to defy understanding, my request is that you try your best to understand. If anyone desires to misunderstand, he can surely read into these pages that which I have not intended.

I deeply sense that only one class of people will actually understand this book. My original purpose was to supply the need of many believers: obviously only those who have need will be able to appreciate the book. Such ones will find here a guidebook. Others will either look upon these truths as ideals or criticise them as inappropriate. According to the measure of his need shall be the believer’s understanding of what is written here. Unless the reader has personal need he will not find any problem solved through the reading of these pages. This is what the reader must guard against.

The deeper the truth the easier is it to become theoretical. Apart from the working of the Holy Spirit, none can arrive at deeper truth. Thus some will treat these principles as a sort of ideal. Let us therefore be careful lest we accept the teachings in the book with our mind and deceive ourselves into thinking we have possessed them already. This is most dangerous, for deception which comes from the flesh and the evil spirit shall increase day by day.

The reader also should be watchful lest he misuse the knowledge he obtains from these pages to criticise others. It is very easy for us to say this is of the spirit and that is of the flesh; but do we not know we ourselves are no exception? Truth is given to set people free, not to find fault. In criticising we prove ourselves to be not one bit less soulish or carnal than the criticised. The danger is most serious; consequently we need to exercise great caution.

In my first preface I mentioned one matter which deserves to be repeated and elaborated upon here. It is of the utmost importance that we never try to analyse ourselves. Upon reading such a treatise as this, we may quite unconsciously become over-active in self-analysis. In observing the condition of our inward life we tend to over-analyse our thoughts and feelings and the movements of the inner man. This may result in much apparent progress, yet actually it renders treatment of the self life that much more difficult. If we persistently turn within ourselves we shall lose our peace completely, for we shall soon discover the discrepancy which exists between our expectation and our actual condition. We expect to be filled with holiness but we are found wanting in holiness. This makes us uncomfortable. God never asks us to be so introspective. To do so constitutes one of the main reasons for spiritual stagnation. Our rest lies in looking to the Lord, not to ourselves. In the degree that we look off unto Him to that degree are we delivered from self. We rest on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, not on our own shifting experience. True spiritual life depends not on probing our feelings and thoughts from dawn to dusk but on “looking off” to the Saviour!

Let not any reader be misled into thinking he must resist all supernatural occurrences. My aim is simply to impress upon you the necessity of testing whether or not something is of God. I most sincerely believe many supernatural experiences come from God; I have witnessed a great number of them. However, I must acknowledge that today many supernatural phenomena are false and deceptive. I do not have the slightest intention of persuading any to refuse everything supernatural. I merely point out in this book the basic differences in principle between these two types of manifestation. When a believer is faced with any supernatural phenomenon, he ought to examine it carefully according to the principles revealed in the Bible before he decides to accept or to reject it.

As to the matter of soul, I honestly feel most Christians swing from one extreme to the other. We on the one hand usually consider emotion as soulish; consequently those who are easily moved or excited we normally categorise as soulish. On the other hand we forget that being rational does not at all constitute one as being spiritual. This misjudgment of spiritualising a rational life must be guarded against equally as much as against that of mistaking a predominantly emotional life for spirituality. Proceeding one step further, we should never reduce the function of our soul to deadly inactivity. Formerly we may never have viewed our soulish feeling and excitement with any degree of concern and thus we walked accordingly. Later, however, and recognising our former error, we now suppress these emotions altogether. Such an attitude to us may appear to be quite good, but it will not make us a whit more spiritual. If my reader should misunderstand on this point, and no matter how minor may be this misunderstanding, then I know his life is going to become very "dead." Why? Because his spirit, without any opportunity to express itself, will be imprisoned by a deadened emotion. And beyond this lies a further danger; namely, that in overly-suppressing his emotion, the believer will develop eventually into a rational, not a spiritual, man; and thus, though in another form, he still remains soulish. Yet the excitement of the soul, if it expresses the spirit's feeling, is extremely valuable; and the thought of the soul, if it reveals the spirit's mind, can be most instructive.

I would like to say something about the concluding Part of the book. Considering the frailty of my body, I would seem to be the least qualified to write on such a matter; perhaps, though, this very frailty affords me a deeper insight since I suffer more weakness, sickness and pain than most people. Countless times my courage has seemed to fail but, thank God, I have been able to finish writing this portion. I hope those who have had similar experiences in their earthly tents will accept what I have written as offering some light out of the darkness through which I have gone. Naturally innumerable are the controversies which have revolved around divine healing. Since this is a book which deals primarily with principles, I refrain from entering into argument with other believers on details. I have said in the book what I feel led to say. What I now request of my reader is that in the phenomena of sicknesses he discern and distinguish as to which come from God and which from self.

I confess there is much which is incomplete in this work; nevertheless, having done my best, I offer that best to you. Knowing the seriousness of the message herein, I asked God with fear and trembling to lead me through it all. What I have set down I present to the conscience of God's children for them to weigh what is said.

I recognise that a work which seeks to uncover the wiles of the enemy shall certainly incur the hostility of the power of darkness and the opposition of many. I have not written with the thought of courting the approval of men. This opposition I consider therefore as of no account. I also realise that if God's children derive help from reading this book they may think more of me than is proper. Let me speak honestly that I am but a man, the weakest of all men. The teachings of these pages reveal the experiences of my weaknesses.

The book is today in the readers' hands. This is wholly God's grace. Should you have the courage and perseverance to read through the first Part and continue on with the others, perhaps God will bless you with His truth. If you already have finished reading the whole work, may I entreat you to re-read it after some time has elapsed. Beloved, let us turn our hearts once again to our Father, cast ourselves upon His bosom by faith and draw from Him His life. Let us confess anew that we are poor but He is rich, that we have nothing but He has everything. Except we are given grace we are but defenceless sinners. May we thank Him with gratitude in our hearts, for the Lord Jesus has given us grace.

Holy Father, what You have entrusted to me is now here in this book. If it seems good to You, may You bless it. May You in these last days keep Your children from corrupted flesh and wicked spirits! Father, may You build Your Son's Body, destroy Your Son's enemy, and hasten the coming of Your Son's Kingdom! Father God, I look to You, I cast myself upon You, and I desire after You!

Watchman Nee
Shanghai, June 25, 1928

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION ON SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY

CHAPTER ONE

SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY

The ordinary concept of the constitution of human beings is dualistic - soul and body. According to this concept soul is the invisible inner spiritual part, while body is the visible outer corporal part. Though there is some truth to this, it is nevertheless inaccurate. Such an opinion comes from fallen man, not from God; apart from God's revelation, no concept is dependable. That the body is man's outward sheath is undoubtedly correct, but the Bible never confuses spirit and soul as though they are the same. Not only are they different in terms; their very natures differ from each other. The Word of God does not divide man into the two parts of soul and body. It treats man, rather, as tripartite - spirit, soul and body. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 reads: "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." This verse precisely shows that the whole man is divided into three parts. The Apostle Paul refers here to the complete sanctification of believers, "sanctify *you wholly*." According to the Apostle, how is a person wholly sanctified? By his spirit and soul and body being kept. From this we can easily understand that the *whole* person comprises these three parts. This verse also makes a distinction between spirit and soul; otherwise, Paul would have said simply "your soul." Since God has distinguished the human spirit from the human soul, we conclude that man is composed of not two, but three, parts: spirit, soul and body.

Is it a matter of any consequence to divide spirit and soul? It is an issue of *supreme* importance for it affects tremendously the spiritual life of a believer. How can a believer understand spiritual life if he does not know what is the extent of the realm of the spirit? Without such understanding how can he grow spiritually? To fail to distinguish between spirit and soul is fatal to spiritual maturity. Christians often account what is soulical, as spiritual, and thus they remain in a soulish state and seek not what is really spiritual. How can we escape loss if we confuse what God has divided?

Spiritual knowledge is very important to spiritual life. Let us add, however, that it is equally as, if not more, important for a believer to be humble and willing to accept the teaching of the Holy Spirit. If so, the Holy Spirit will grant him the experience of the dividing of spirit and soul, although he may not have too much knowledge concerning this truth. On the one hand, the most ignorant believer, without the slightest idea of the division of spirit and soul, may yet experience such a dividing in real life. On the other hand, the most informed believer, completely conversant with the truth concerning spirit and soul, may nonetheless have no experience of it. Far better is that person who may have both the knowledge and the experience. The majority, however, lack such experience. Consequently, it is well initially to lead these to know the different functions of spirit and soul and then to encourage them to seek what is spiritual.

Other portions of the Scriptures make this same differentiation between spirit and soul. "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of *soul and spirit*, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). The writer in this verse divides man's non-corporal elements into two parts, "soul and spirit." The corporal part is mentioned

here as including the joints and marrow organs of motion and sensation. When the priest uses the sword to cut and completely dissect the sacrifice, nothing inside can be hidden. Even joint and marrow are separated. In like manner the Lord Jesus uses the Word of God on His people to separate thoroughly, to pierce even to the division of the spiritual, the soulical, and the physical. And from this it follows that since soul and spirit can be *divided*, they must be different in nature. It is thus evident here that man is a composite of three parts.

THE CREATION OF MAN

“And Jehovah God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7 ASV). When God first created man He formed him of dust from the ground, and then breathed “the breath of life” into his nostrils. As soon as the breath of life, which became man’s spirit, came into contact with man’s body, the soul was produced. Hence the soul is the combination of man’s body and spirit. The Scriptures therefore call man “a living soul.” The breath of life became man’s spirit; that is, the principle of life within him. The Lord Jesus tells us “it is the spirit that gives life” (John 6:63). This breath of life comes from the Lord of Creation. However, we must not confuse *man’s* spirit with God’s Holy Spirit. The latter differs from our human spirit. Romans 8:16 demonstrates their difference by declaring that “it is the Spirit himself bearing witness *with* our spirit that we are children of God.” The original of the word “life” in “breath of life” is *chay* and is in the *plural*. This may refer to the fact that the inbreathing of God produced a twofold life, soulical and spiritual. When the inbreathing of God entered man’s body it became the spirit of man; but when the spirit reacted with the body the soul was produced. This explains the source of our spiritual and soulical lives. We must recognise, though, that this spirit is not God’s *Own* life, for “the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4). It is not the entrance of the uncreated life of God into man, neither is it that life of God which we receive at regeneration. What we receive at new birth is God’s *Own* life as typified by the tree of life. But our human spirit, though permanently existing, is void of “eternal life.”

“Formed man of dust from the ground” refers to man’s body; “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” refers to man’s spirit as it came from God; and “Man became a living soul” refers to man’s soul when the body was quickened by the spirit and brought into being a living and self-conscious man. A complete man is a trinity - the composite of spirit, soul and body. According to Genesis 2:7, man was made up of only two independent elements, the corporeal and the spiritual; but when God placed the spirit within the casing of the earth, the soul was produced. The spirit of man touching the dead body produced the soul. The body apart from the spirit was dead, but with the spirit man was made alive. The organ thus animated was called the soul.

“Man became a living soul” expresses not merely the fact that the combination of spirit and body produced the soul; it also suggests that spirit and body were completely *merged* in this soul. In other words, soul and body were combined with the spirit, and spirit and body were merged in the soul. Adam “in his unfallen state knew nothing of these ceaseless strivings of spirit and flesh which are matters of daily experience to us. There was a perfect *blending* of his three natures into one and the soul as the uniting medium became the cause of his individuality, of his existence as a distinct being.”

(Pember's *Earth's Earliest Age*) Man was designated a living soul, for it was there that the spirit and body met and through which his individuality was known. Perhaps we may use an imperfect illustration: drop some dye into a cup of water. The dye and water will blend into a third substance called ink. In like manner the two independent elements of spirit and body combine to become living soul. (The analogy fails in that the soul produced by the combining of spirit and body becomes an independent, indissoluble element as much as the spirit and body.)

God treated man's soul as something unique. As the angels were created as spirits, so man was created predominantly as a living soul. Man not only had a body, a body with the breath of life; he became a living soul as well. Thus we find later in the Scriptures that God often referred to men as "souls." Why? Because what the man is depends on how his soul is. His soul represents him and expresses his individuality. It is the organ of man's free will, the organ in which spirit and body are completely merged. If man's soul wills to obey God, it will allow the spirit to rule over the man as ordered by God. The soul, if it chooses, also can suppress the spirit and take some other delight as lord of the man. This trinity of spirit, soul and body may be partially illustrated by a light bulb. Within the bulb, which can represent the total man, there are electricity, light and wire. The spirit is like the electricity, the soul the light, and body the wire. Electricity is the cause of the light while light is the effect of electricity. Wire is the material substance for carrying the electricity as well as for manifesting the light. The combination of spirit and body produces soul, that which is unique to man. As electricity, carried by the wire, is expressed in light, so spirit acts upon the soul and the soul, in turn, expresses itself through the body.

However, we must remember well that whereas the soul is the meeting point of the elements of our being in this present life, the spirit will be the ruling power in our resurrection state. For the Bible tells us that "it is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44). Yet here is a vital point: we who have been joined to the resurrected Lord can even now have our spirit rule over the whole being. We are not united to the first Adam who was made a living soul but to the last Adam Who is a life-giving spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45).

RESPECTIVE FUNCTIONS OF SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY

It is through the corporal body that man comes into contact with the material world. Hence we may label the body as that part which gives us *world-consciousness*. The soul comprises the intellect which aids us in the present state of existence and the emotions which proceed from the senses. Since the soul belongs to man's own self and reveals his personality, it is termed the part of *self-consciousness*. The spirit is that part by which we commune with God and by which alone we are able to apprehend and worship Him. Because it tells us of our relationship with God, the spirit is called the element of *God-consciousness*. God dwells in the spirit, self dwells in the soul, while senses dwell in the body.

As we have mentioned already, the soul is the meeting point of spirit and body, for there they are merged. By his spirit man holds intercourse with the spiritual world and with the Spirit of God, both receiving and expressing the power and life of the spiritual realm. Through his body man is in contact with the outside sensuous world, affecting it and being affected by it. The soul stands between these two worlds, yet belongs to

both. It is linked with the spiritual world through the spirit and with the material world through the body. It also possesses the power of free will, hence is able to choose from among its environments. The spirit can not act directly upon the body. It needs a medium, and that medium is the soul produced by the touching of the spirit with the body. The soul therefore stands between the spirit and the body, binding these two together. The spirit can subdue the body through the medium of the soul, so that it will obey God; likewise the body through the soul can draw the spirit into loving the world.

Of these three elements the spirit is the noblest for it joins with God. The body is the lowest for it contacts with matter. The soul lying between them joins the two together and also takes their character to be its own. The soul makes it possible for the spirit and the body to communicate and to co-operate. The work of the soul is to keep these two in their proper order so that they may not lose their right relationship - namely, that the lowest, the body, may be subjected to the spirit, and that the highest, the spirit, may govern the body through the soul. Man's prime factor is definitely the soul. It looks to the spirit to give what the latter has received from the Holy Spirit in order that the soul, after it has been perfected, may transmit what it has obtained to the body; then the body too may share in the perfection of the Holy Spirit and so become a spiritual body.

The spirit is the noblest part of man and occupies the innermost area of his being. The body is the lowest and takes the outermost place. Between these two dwells the soul, serving as their medium. The body is the outer shelter of the soul, while the soul is the outer sheath of the spirit. The spirit transmits its thought to the soul and the soul exercises the body to obey the spirit's order. This is the meaning of the soul as the medium. Before the fall of man the spirit controlled the whole being through the soul.

The power of the soul is most substantial, since the spirit and the body are merged there and make it the site of man's personality and influence. Before man committed sin the power of the soul was completely under the dominion of the spirit. Its strength was therefore the spirit's strength. The spirit can not itself act upon the body; it can only do so through the medium of the soul. This we can see in Luke 1:46-47: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Darby). "Here the change in tense shows that the spirit first conceived joy in God, and then, communicating with the soul, caused it to give expression to the feeling by means of the bodily organ." (Pember's *Earth's Earliest Age*)

To repeat, the soul is the site of personality. The will, intellect and emotions of man are there. As the spirit is used to communicate with the spiritual world and the body with the natural world, so the soul stands between and exercises its power to discern and decide whether the spiritual or the natural world should reign. Sometimes too the soul itself takes control over man through its intellect, thus creating an ideational world which reigns. In order for the spirit to govern, the soul must give its consent; otherwise the spirit is helpless to regulate the soul and the body. But this decision is up to the soul, for therein resides the personality of the man.

Actually the soul is the pivot of the entire being, because man's volition belongs to it. It is only when the soul is willing to assume a humble position that the spirit can ever manage the whole man. If the soul rebels against taking such a position the spirit will be powerless to rule. This explains the meaning of the free will of man. Man is not an

automaton that turns according to God's will. Rather, man has full sovereign power to decide for himself. He possesses the organ of his own volition and can choose either to follow God's will or to resist Him and follow Satan's will instead. God desires that the spirit, being the noblest part of man, should control the whole being. Yet, the will - the crucial part of individuality - belongs to the soul. It is the will which determines whether the spirit, the body, or even itself is to rule. In view of the fact that the soul possesses such power and is the organ of man's individuality, the Bible calls man a "living soul."

THE HOLY TEMPLE AND MAN

"Do you not know," writes the Apostle Paul, "that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16) He has received revelation in likening man to the temple. As God formerly dwelt in the temple, so the Holy Spirit indwells man today. By comparing him to the temple we can see how the tripartite elements of man are distinctly manifested.

We know the temple is divided into three parts. The first is the outer court which is seen by all and visited by all. All external worship is offered here. Going further in is the Holy Place, into which only the priests can enter and where they present oil, incense and bread to God. They are quite near to God - yet not the nearest, for they are still outside the veil and therefore unable to stand before His very presence. God dwells deepest within, in the Holy of Holies, where darkness is overshadowed by brilliant light and into which no man can enter. Though the high priest does enter in once annually, it nonetheless indicates that before the veil is rent there can be no man in the Holy of Holies.

Man is God's temple also, and he too has three parts. The body is like the outer court, occupying an external position with its life visible to all. Here man ought to obey every commandment of God. Here God's Son serves as a substitute and dies for mankind. Inside is man's soul which constitutes the inner life of man and which embraces man's emotion, volition and mind. Such is the Holy Place of a regenerated person, for his love, will and thought are fully enlightened that he may serve God even as the priest of old did. Innermost, behind the veil, lies the Holy of Holies into which no human light has ever penetrated and no naked eye has ever pierced. It is "the secret place of the Most High," the dwelling place of God. It can not be reached by man unless God is willing to rend the veil. It is man's spirit. This spirit lies beyond man's self-consciousness and above his sensibility. Here man unites and communes with God.

No light is provided for the Holy of Holies because God dwells, there. There is light in the Holy Place supplied by the lamp stand of seven branches. The outer court stands under the broad daylight. All these serve as images and shadows to a regenerated person. His spirit is like the Holy of Holies indwelt by God, where everything is carried on by faith, beyond the sight, sense or understanding of the believing one. The soul resembles the Holy Place for it is amply enlightened with many rational thoughts and precepts, much knowledge and understanding concerning the things in the ideational and material world. The body is comparable to the outer court, clearly visible to all. The body's actions may be seen by everyone.

The order which God presents to us is unmistakable: “your spirit and soul and body” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). It is not “soul and spirit and body,” nor is it “body and soul and spirit.” The spirit is the pre-eminent part, hence it is mentioned first; the body is the lowest and therefore is last mentioned; the soul stands between, so is mentioned between. Having now seen God’s order, we can appreciate the wisdom of the Bible in likening man to a temple. We can recognise the perfect harmony which exists between the temple and man in respect to both order and value.

Temple service moves according to the revelation in the Holy of Holies. All activities in the Holy Place and in the outer court are regulated by the presence of God in the Holiest Place. This is the most sacred spot, the place upon which the four corners of the temple converge and rest. It may seem to us that nothing is done in the Holiest because it is pitch dark. All activities are in the Holy Place; even those activities of the outer court are controlled by the priests of the Holy Place. Yet all the activities of the Holy Place actually are directed by the revelation in the utter quietness and peace of the Holy of Holies.

It is not difficult to perceive the spiritual application. The soul, the organ of our personality, is composed of mind, volition and emotion. It appears as though the soul is master of all actions, for the body follows its direction. Before the fall of man, however, the soul, in spite of its many activities, was governed by the spirit. And this is the order God still wants: first the spirit, then the soul, and lastly the body.

CHAPTER TWO

SPIRIT AND SOUL

It is imperative that a believer know he has a spirit, since, as we shall soon learn, every communication of God with man occurs there. If the believer does not discern his own spirit he invariably is ignorant of how to commune with God in the spirit. He easily substitutes the thoughts or emotions of the soul for the works of the spirit. Thus he confines himself to the outer realm, unable ever to reach the spiritual realm.

1 Corinthians 2:11 speaks of “the spirit of the man which is in him.” 1 Corinthians 5:4 mentions “my spirit.” Romans 8:16 says “our spirit.” 1 Corinthians 14:14 uses “my spirit.” 1 Corinthians 14:32 tells of the “spirits of prophets.” Proverbs 25:28 refers to “his own spirit.” (Darby) Hebrews 12:23 records “the spirits of just men.” Zechariah 12:1 states that “the Lord ... formed the spirit of man within him.”

The above Scripture verses sufficiently prove that we human beings do possess a human spirit. This spirit is not synonymous with our soul nor is it the same as the Holy Spirit. We worship God in this spirit.

According to the teaching of the Bible and the experience of believers, the human spirit can be said to comprise three parts; or, to put it another way, one can say it has three main functions. These are conscience, intuition and communion.

The *conscience* is the discerning organ which distinguishes right and wrong; not, however, through the influence of knowledge stored in the mind but rather by a spontaneous direct judgment. Often reasoning will justify things which our conscience judges. The work of the conscience is independent and direct; it does not bend to outside opinions. If man should do wrong it will raise its voice of accusation. *Intuition* is the sensing organ of the human spirit. It is so diametrically different from physical sense and soulful sense that it is called intuition. Intuition involves a direct sensing independent of any outside influence. That knowledge which comes to us without any help from the mind, emotion or volition comes intuitively. We really “know” through our intuition; our mind merely helps us to “Understand.” The revelations of God and all the movements of the Holy Spirit are known to the believer through his intuition. A believer must therefore heed these two elements: the voice of conscience and the teaching of intuition. *Communion* is worshiping God. The organs of the soul are incompetent to worship God. God is not apprehended by our thoughts, feelings or intentions, for He can only be known *directly* in our spirits. Our worship of God and God’s communications with us are directly in the spirit. They take place in “the inner man,” not in the soul or outward man.

We can conclude then that these three elements of conscience, intuition and communion are deeply interrelated and function coordinately. The relationship between conscience and intuition is that conscience judges according to intuition; it condemns all conduct which does not follow the directions given by intuition. Intuition is related to communion or worship in that God is known by man intuitively and reveals His will to man in the intuition. No measure of expectation or deduction gives us the knowledge of God.

From the following three groups of Scripture verses it can readily be observed that our spirits possess the function of conscience (we do not say that the spirit is conscience), the function of intuition (or spiritual sense), and the function of, communion (or worship).

A) *The Function of Conscience in Man's Spirit*

- “The Lord your God *hardened* his spirit” - Deuteronomy 2:30
- “Saves the *crushed* in spirit” - Psalm 34:18
- “Put a new and *right* spirit within me” - Psalm 51:10
- “When Jesus had thus spoken, He was *troubled* in spirit” - John 13:21
- “His spirit was *provoked* within him as he saw that the city was full of idols” - Acts 17:16
- “It is the Spirit himself bearing *witness* with our spirit that we are *children* of God” - Romans 8:16
- “I am present in spirit, and as if present, I have already *pronounced judgment*” - 1 Corinthians 5:3
- “I had no *rest* in my spirit” - 2 Corinthians 2:13 (AV)
- “For God did not give us the spirit of *timidity*” - 2 Timothy 1:7

B) *The Function of Intuition in Man's Spirit*

- “The spirit indeed is *willing*” - Matthew 26:41
- “Jesus *perceiving* in his spirit” - Mark 2:8
- “He *sighed* deeply in his spirit” - Mark 8:12
- “He was deeply *moved* in spirit” - John 11:33
- “Paul was *pressed* in the spirit” - Acts 18:5 (AV)
- “Being *fervent* in spirit” - Acts 18:25
- “I am going to Jerusalem, *bound* in the spirit” - Acts 20:22
- “What person *knows* a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him” - 1 Corinthians 2:11
- “They *refreshed* my spirit as well as yours” - 1 Corinthians 16:18
- “His spirit was *refreshed* by you all” - 2 Corinthians 7:13 (AV)

C) *The Function of Communion in Man's Spirit*

- “My spirit *rejoices* in God my Saviour” - Luke 1:47
- “The true worshipers will *worship* the Father in spirit and truth” - John 4:23
- “Whom I *serve* with my spirit” - Romans 1:9
- “We *serve* ... in the new life of the spirit” - Romans 7:6
- “You have received the spirit of sonship when we *cry* Abba Father” - Romans 8:15
- “The Spirit himself bearing witness *with* our spirit” - Romans 8:16
- “He who is *united* to the Lord becomes one spirit with him” - 1 Corinthians 6:17

“*I will sing with the spirit*” - 1 Corinthians 14:15

“If you *bless* with the spirit” - 1 Corinthians 14:16

“In the spirit he *carried me away*” - Revelation 21:10

We can know by these Scriptures that our spirit possesses at least these three functions. Although unregenerated men do not yet have life, they nevertheless possess these functions (but their worship is of evil spirits). Some people manifest more of these functions while others less. This does not however imply that they are not dead in sins and transgressions. The New Testament does not consider those with a sensitive conscience, keen intuition or a spiritual tendency and interest to be saved individuals. Such people only prove to us that aside from the mind, emotion and will of our soul, we also have a spirit. Prior to regeneration the spirit is separated from God's life; only afterwards does the life of God and of the Holy Spirit dwell in our spirits. They then have been quickened to be instruments of the Holy Spirit.

Our aim in studying the significance of the spirit is to enable us to realise that we as human beings possess an independent spirit. This spirit is not man's mind, his will or his emotion; on the contrary, it includes the functions of conscience, intuition and communion. It is here in the spirit that God regenerates us, teaches us, and leads us into His rest. But sad to say, due to long years of bondage to the soul many Christians know very little of their spirit. We ought to tremble before God, asking Him to teach us through experience what is spiritual and what is soulish.

Before the believer is born again his spirit becomes so sunken and surrounded by his soul that it is impossible for him to distinguish whether something is emanating from the soul or from the spirit. The functions of the latter have become mixed up with those of the former. Furthermore, the spirit has lost its primary function - towards God; for it is dead to God. It thus would appear that it has become an accessory to the soul. And as the mind, emotion and volition grow stronger, the functions of the spirit become so eclipsed as to render them almost unknown. That is why there must be the work of dividing between soul and spirit after a believer is regenerated.

In searching the Scriptures it does seem that an unregenerated spirit functions no differently from the way the soul does. The following verses illustrate this.

“His spirit was troubled” - Genesis 41:8

“Then their spirit was appeased toward him” - Judges 8:3 (Darby)

“He that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly” - Proverbs 14:29 (Darby)

“A downcast spirit dries up the bones” - Proverbs 17:22

“Those who err in spirit” - Isaiah 29:24

“And shall wail for anguish of spirit” - Isaiah 65:14

“His spirit was hardened” - Daniel 5:20

These show us the works of the *unregenerated* spirit and indicate how similar are its works to those of the soul. The reason for not mentioning soul but spirit is to reveal what has occurred in the very depth of man. It discloses how man's spirit has become controlled and influenced completely by his soul with the result that it manifests the

works of the soul. The spirit nonetheless still exists because these works come from the spirit. Though ruled by the soul the spirit does not cease to be an organ.

SOUL

Aside from having a spirit which enables him to commune with God, man also possesses a soul, his self-consciousness. He is made conscious of his existence by the work of his soul. It is the seat of our personality. The elements which make us human belong to the soul. Intellect, thought, ideals, love, emotion, discernment, choice, decision, etc., are but various experiences of the soul.

It has been explained already that the spirit and the body are merged in the soul which, in turn, forms the organ of our personality. That is why the Bible sometimes calls man "souls," as though man has only this element. For example, Genesis 12:5 refers to people as "souls" (ASV). Again, when Jacob brought his entire family down to Egypt, it is recorded, that "all the souls of the house of Jacob, that came into Egypt, were threescore and ten" (Genesis 46:27 ASV).

Numerous instances occur in the original language of the Bible where "soul" is used instead of "Man." For the seat and essence of the personality is the soul. To comprehend a man's personality is to comprehend his person. Man's existence, characteristics and life are all in the soul. The Bible consequently calls man "a soul."

That which constitutes man's personality are the three main faculties of volition, mind and emotion. Volition is the instrument for our decisions, revealing our power to choose. It expresses our willingness or unwillingness: "we will" or "we won't." Without it, man is reduced to an automaton. Mind, the instrument for our thoughts, manifests our intellectual power. Out of this arise wisdom, knowledge and reasoning. Lack of it makes a man foolish and dull. The instrument for our likes and dislikes is the faculty of emotion. Through it we are able to express love or hate and to feel joyful, angry, sad or happy. Any shortage of it will render man as insensitive as wood or stone.

A careful study of the Bible will yield the conclusion that these three primary faculties of personality belong to the soul. Too many Scripture passages exist to quote them all. Hence only a few selections can be enumerated here.

A) *The Souls Faculty of Volition*

"Give me not up to the will (original, "soul") of my adversaries" - Psalm 27:12

"Thou dost not give him up to the will (original, "soul") of his enemies" Psalm 41:2

"Delivered you to the greed (original, "soul") of your enemies" - Ezekiel 16:27

"You shall let her go where she will (original, "soul")" - Deuteronomy 21:14

"Aha, we have our heart's desire (original "soul")" - Psalm 35:25

“Or swear an oath to bind himself (original, “soul”) by a pledge” - Numbers 30:2

“Now set your mind and heart (original, “soul”) to seek the Lord your God” - 1 Chronicles 22:19

“They desire and *lift up* their soul to return to dwell there” - Jeremiah 44:14 (Amplified)

“These afflictions my soul *refuses* to touch” - Job 6:7 (Amplified)

“My *soul chooseth* strangling, death, rather than my bones” - Job 7:15 (Darby)

The “will or “heart” here points to the human will. “Set the heart,” “lift up their soul,” “refuse” and “choose” are all exercises of the will, having their springs in the soul.

B) *The Souls Faculty of Intellect or Mind*

“Whereunto they *lift up* their soul, their sons and their daughters” - Ezekiel 24:25 (Darby)

“That a soul be without *knowledge* is not good” - Proverbs 19:2 (Darby)

“How long must I bear pain (Syriac: Hebrew: *hold counsels*) in my soul?” - Psalm 13:2

“Marvellous are thy works, and that my *soul knoweth* right well” - Psalm 139:14 (Darby)

“My soul continually *thinks* of it” - Lamentations 3:20

“*Knowledge* will be pleasant to your soul” - Proverbs 2:10

“Keep sound *wisdom* and discretion ... and they will be life for your soul” - Proverbs 3:21-22

“Know that *wisdom is* such to your soul” Proverbs 24:14

Here “knowledge,” “counsel,” “lift up,” “think,” etc., exist as the activities of man’s intellect or mind, which the Bible indicates as emanating from the soul.

C) *The Souls Faculty of Emotion*

(1) EMOTIONS OF AFFECTION

“The soul of Jonathan was *knit* to the soul of David, and Jonathan *loved* him as his own soul” - 1 Samuel 18:1

“You whom my soul *loves*” - Song of Solomon 1:7

“My soul *magnifies* the Lord” - Luke 1:46

“His life *abhorreth* bread, and his soul dainty food” - Job 33:20 (Darby)

“Who are *hated* by David’s soul” - 2 Samuel 5:8

“My soul was *vexed* with them” - Zechariah 11:8 (Darby)

“You shall *love* the Lord your God ... with all your soul” Deuteronomy 6:5

“My *soul is weary* of my life” - Job 10:1 (Darby)

“Their soul *abhorreth* all manner of food” - Psalm 107:18 (Darby)

(2) EMOTIONS OF DESIRE

“For whatever thy soul *desireth* ... or for whatever thy *soul asketh* of thee”
- Deuteronomy 14:26 (Darby)

“What thy soul may *say*” - 1 Samuel 20:4 (Darby)

“My soul *longs*, yea, *faints* for the courts of the Lord” - Psalm 84:2

“*Your soul’s longing*” - Ezekiel 24:21 (Darby)

“*So longs* my soul for thee, O God” - Psalm 42:1

“My *soul yearns* for thee *in the night*” - Isaiah 26:9

“*My soul is well pleased*” - Matthew 12:18

(3) EMOTIONS OF FEELING AND SENSING

“A sword *will pierce through* your own soul also” - Luke 2:35

“All the people were *bitter in soul*” - 1 Samuel 30:6

“Her soul is *bitter and vexed* within her” - 2 Kings 4:27 (Amplified)

“His soul was *grieved* for the misery of Israel” - Judges 10:16 (Darby)

“How long will ye *vex my soul*” - Job 19:2 (Darby)

“My soul shall *exult* in my God” - Isaiah 61:10

“*Gladden* the soul of thy servant” - Psalm 86:4

“Their soul *fainted* within them” - Psalm 107:5

“*Why are you cast down*, O my soul.” - Psalm 42:5

“Return, O my soul, to your *rest*” - Psalm 116:7

“My *soul is consumed* with longing” - Psalm 119:20

“*Sweetness to the sour*” - Proverbs 16:24

“Let your soul *delight* itself in fatness” - Isaiah 55:2 (Amplified)

“My soul *fainted* within me” - Jonah 2:7

“MY soul is very *sorrowful*” - Matthew 26:38

“Now is my *soul troubled*” - John 12:27

“He was *vexed in his* righteous soul day after day” - 2 Peter 2:8

We can discover in the above observations touching upon man’s various emotions that our soul is capable of loving and hating, desiring and aspiring, feeling and sensing.

From this brief Biblical study it becomes quite obvious that the soul of man contains in it that part known as will, that part known as mind or intellect, and that part known as emotion.

THE SOUL LIFE

Some Bible scholars point out to us that three different words are employed in the Greek to designate “life”: (1) *bios* (2) *psuche* (3) *zoe*. They all describe life but convey very different meanings. *Bios* has reference to the means of life or living. Our Lord Jesus used this word when He commended the woman who cast into the temple treasury her whole living. *Zoe* is the highest life, the life of the spirit. Whenever the

Bible speaks of eternal life it uses this word. *Psuche* refers to the animated life of man, his natural life or the life of the soul. The Bible employs this term when it describes the human life.

Let us note here that the words “soul” and “soul life” in the Bible are one and the same in the original. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for “soul” - *nephesh* - is used equally for “soul life.” The New Testament consequently employs the Greek word *psuche* for both “soul” and “soul life.” Hence we know “soul” not only is one of the three elements of man but also is man’s life, his natural life. In many places in the Bible, “soul” is translated as “life.”

“Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood” - Genesis 9:4-5

“The life of the flesh is in the blood” - Leviticus 17:11

“Those who sought the child’s life are dead” - Matthew 2:20

“Is it lawful on the Sabbath to save life or to destroy it?” - Luke 6:9

“Who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ” - Acts 15:26

“I do not account my life of any value” - Acts 20:24

“To give his life as a ransom for many” - Matthew 20:28

“The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” - John 10:11, 15, 17

The word “life” in these verses is “soul” in the original. It is so translated because it would be difficult to understand otherwise. The soul actually is the very life of man.

As we have mentioned, “soul” is one of the three elements of man. “Soul life” is man’s natural life, that which makes him exist and animates him. It is the life whereby man today lives; it is the power whereby man becomes what he is. Since the Bible applies *nephesh* and *psuche* both to soul and to man’s life, it is evident to us that these two, though distinguishable, are not separable. They are distinguishable inasmuch as in certain places *psuche* (for example) must be translated either as “soul or as “life.” The translations can not be interchanged. For instance, “soul” and “life” in Luke 12:19-23 and Mark 3:4 are actually the same word in the original, yet to translate then, with the same word in English would be meaningless. They are inseparable, however, because these two are completely united in man. A man with out a soul does not live. The Bible never tells us that a natural man possesses a life other than the soul. The life of man is but the soul permeating the body. As the soul is joined to the body it becomes the life of man. Life is the phenomenon of the soul. The Bible considers man’s present body a “soulical body” (1 Corinthians 15:44 original), for the life of our present body is that of the soul. Man’s life is therefore simply an expression of the composite of his mental, emotional and volitional energies. “Personality” in the natural realm embraces these different parts of the soul but only that much. Soul life is man’s natural life.

That the soul is man’s life is a most important fact to recognise for it bears greatly upon the kind of Christian we become, whether spiritual or soulish. This we shall explain further on.

SOUL AND MAN'S SELF

Inasmuch as we have seen how soul is the site of our personality, the organ of volition and the natural life, we can easily conclude that this soul is also the “real I” - I myself. Our self is the soul. This too can be demonstrated by the Bible. In Numbers 30, the phrase “bind himself” occurs ten times. In the original it is “bind his soul.” From this we are led to understand that the soul is our own self. In many other passages of the Bible we find the word “soul” is translated as “self.” For instance:

“You shall not defile yourselves with them” - Leviticus 11:43

“You shall not defile yourselves” - Leviticus 11:44

“For themselves and for their descendants” - Esther 9:31

“You who tear yourself in your anger” - Job 18:4

“He justified himself” - Job 32:2

“But themselves go into captivity” - Isaiah 46:2

“What every one (original, “every soul”) must eat, that only may be prepared by you” - Exodus 12:16

“Who kills any person (original, “kill any soul”) without intent” - Numbers 35:11, 15

“Let me (original, “let my soul”) die the death of the righteous” - Numbers 23:10

“When any one (original, “any soul”) brings a cereal offering” - Leviticus 2:1

“I have ... quieted myself” - Psalm 131:2 (AV)

“Think not that in the king’s palace you (original, “soul”) will escape” - Esther 4:13

“The Lord God has sworn by himself (original, “sworn by his soul”)” - Amos 6:8

These Scriptures from the Old Testament inform us in various ways how the soul is man’s own self.

The New Testament conveys the same impression. “Souls” is the original rendering for “eight *persons*” in 1 Peter 3:20 and for “two hundred and seventy-six *persons*” in Acts 27:37. The phrase in Romans 2:9 translated today as “every human being who does evil” is given in the original as “every soul of man that works evil.” Hence, to warn the soul of a man who works evil is to warn the evil man. In James 5:20, saving a soul is considered to be saving a sinner. And Luke 12:19 treats the rich fool’s speaking words of comfort to his soul as speaking to himself. It is therefore clear that the Bible as a whole views man’s soul or soul life as the man himself. A confirmation of this can be found in the words of our Lord Jesus, given in two different Gospels. Matthew 16:26 reads, “For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits *his life* (*psuche*)? Or what shall a man give in return for *his life* (*psuche*)?” Whereas Luke 9:5 renders it: “For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits *himself* (*eautov*)?” Both Gospel writers record the same thing; yet one uses “life” (or “soul”) while the other uses “himself.” This signifies that the Holy Spirit is

using Matthew to explain the meaning of “himself” in Luke and Luke the meaning of “life” in Matthew. Man’s soul or life is the man himself, and vice versa.

Such a study enables us to conclude that, to be a man, we must share what is included in man’s soul. Every natural man possesses this element and whatever it includes, for the soul is the common life shared by all natural men. Before regeneration whatever is included in life - be it self, life, strength, power, choice, thought, opinion, love, feeling - pertains to the soul. In other words, soul life is the life a man inherits at birth. All that this life possesses and all that it may become are in the realm of the soul. If we distinctly recognise what is soulful it will then be easier for us later on to recognise what is spiritual. It will be possible to divide the spiritual from the soulful.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FALL OF MAN

The man *God* fashioned was notably different from all other created beings. Man possessed a spirit similar to that of the angels and at the same time had a soul resembling that of the lower animals. When God created man He gave him a perfect freedom. He did not make man an automaton, controlled automatically by His will. This is evident in Genesis 2 at the time God instructed the original man what fruit he could eat and what not. The man God created was not a machine run by God; instead he had perfect freedom of choice. If he chose to obey God, he could; if he decided to rebel against God, he could do that too. Man had in his possession a sovereignty by which he could exercise his volition in choosing to obey or to disobey. This is a most important point, for we must realise that in our spiritual life God never deprives us our freedom, Unless we actively co-operate, God will not undertake anything for us. Neither God nor the devil can do any work without first obtaining our consent, for man's will is free.

Man's spirit was originally the highest part of his entire being to which soul and body were to be subject. Under normal conditions the spirit is like a mistress, the soul like a steward, and the body like a servant, The mistress commits matters to the steward who in turn commands the servant to carry them out. The mistress gives orders privately to the steward; the steward in turn transmits them openly to the servant. The steward appears to be the lord of all, but in actuality the lord over all is the mistress. Unfortunately man has fallen; he has been defeated and has sinned; consequently, the proper order of spirit, soul and body has been confused.

God bestowed upon man a sovereign power and accorded numerous gifts to a human soul, Thought and will or intellect and intention are among the prominent portions. The original purpose of God is that the human soul should receive and assimilate the truth and substance of God's spiritual life. He gave gifts to men in order that man might take God's knowledge and will as his own. If man's spirit and soul would maintain their created perfection, healthiness and liveliness, his body would then be able to continue forever without change. If he would exercise his will by taking and eating the fruit of life, God's Own life undoubtedly would enter his spirit, permeate his soul, transform his entire inner man, and translate his body into incorruptibility. He then would literally be in possession of "eternal life." In that event his soulical life would be filled completely with spiritual life, and his whole being would be transformed into that which is spiritual. Conversely, if the order of spirit and soul would be reversed, then man would plunge into darkness and the human body could not last long but would soon be corrupted.

We know how man's soul chose the tree of the knowledge of good and evil rather than the tree of life. Yet is it not clear that God's will for Adam was to eat the fruit of the tree of life? Because before He forbade Adam to eat the fruit of the tree of good and evil and warned him that in the day he ate he should die (Genesis 2:17), He first commanded man to eat freely of every tree of the garden and purposely mentioned the tree of life in the midst of the garden. Who can say that this is not so?

“The fruit of the knowledge of good and evil” uplifts the human soul and suppresses the spirit. God does not forbid man to eat of this fruit merely to test man. He forbids it because He knows that by eating this fruit man’s soul life will be so stimulated that his spirit life will be stifled. This means man will lose the true knowledge of God and thus be dead to Him. God’s forbiddance shows God’s love. The knowledge of good and evil in this world is itself evil. Such knowledge springs from the intellect of man’s soul. It puffs up the soul life and consequently deflates the spirit life to the point of losing any knowledge of God, to the point of becoming as much as dead.

A great number of God’s servants view this tree of life as God offering life to the world in His Son the Lord Jesus. This is eternal life, God’s nature, His uncreated life. Hence, we have here two trees - one germinates spiritual life while the other develops soulish life. Man in his original state is neither sinful nor holy and righteous. He stands between the two. Either he can accept God’s life, thus becoming a spiritual man and a partaker of divine nature; or he can inflate his created life into becoming soulish, consequently inflicting death on his spirit. God imparted a perfect balance to the three parts of man. Whenever one part is overdeveloped the others are afflicted.

Our spiritual walk will be greatly helped if we understand the origin of soul and its life principle. Our spirit comes directly from God for it is God-given (Numbers 16:22). Our soul is not so directly derived; it was produced after the spirit entered the body. It is therefore characteristically related to the created being. It is the created life, the natural life. The soul’s usefulness is indeed extensive if it maintains its proper place as a steward, permitting the spirit to be mistress. Man can then receive God’s life and be related to God in life. If, however, this soulical realm becomes inflated the spirit is accordingly suppressed. All man’s doings will be confined to the natural realm of the created unable to be united to God’s supernatural and uncreated life. The original man succumbed to death in that he ate of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, thereby abnormally developing his soulical life.

Satan tempted Eve with a question. He knew his query would arouse the woman’s thought. If she were completely under the spirit’s control she would reject such questioning.

By trying to answer she exercised her mind in disobedience to the spirit. Doubtless Satan’s question was full of errors, for his prime motive was merely to incite Eve’s mental exertion. He would have expected Eve to correct him, but alas, Eve dared to change God’s Word in her conversation with Satan. The enemy accordingly was emboldened to tempt her to eat by suggesting to her that, in eating, her eyes would be opened and she would be like God - knowing good and evil. “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate” (Genesis 3:6). That was how Eve viewed the matter. Satan provoked her soulical thought first and then advanced to seize her will. The result: she fell into sin.

Satan always uses physical need as the first target for attack. He simply mentioned eating fruit to Eve, an entirely physical matter. Next he proceeded to entice her soul, intimating that by indulging, her eyes would be opened to know good and evil. Although such searching for knowledge was perfectly legitimate, the consequence nonetheless led her spirit into open rebellion against God because she misconstrued

God's forbiddance as arising from an evil intention. Satan's temptation reaches initially to the body, then to the soul and lastly to the spirit.

After being tempted Eve gave her verdict. To begin with, the tree was "good for food." This is the "lust of the flesh." Eve's flesh was the first to be stirred up. Second, "it was a delight to the eyes." This is "the lust of the eyes." Both the body and her soul were now enticed. Third, "the tree was to be desired to make one wise." This is "the pride of life." Such desire revealed the wavering of her emotion and will. Her soul was now agitated beyond control. It no longer stood by as a spectator but had been goaded into desiring the fruit. How dangerous a master human emotion is!

Why should Eve desire the fruit? It was not merely the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, but also curiosity's urge for wisdom. In the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge, even of so-called "spiritual knowledge," activities of the soul often can be detected. When one tries to increase his knowledge by doing mental gymnastics over books without waiting upon God and looking to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, his soul is plainly in full swing. This will deplete his spiritual life. Because the fall of man was occasioned by seeking knowledge, God uses the foolishness of the cross to "destroy the wisdom of the wise." Intellect was the chief cause of the fall; hence, in order to be saved one must believe in the folly of the Word of the cross rather than depend upon his intellect. The tree of knowledge causes man to fall, so God employs the tree of folly (1 Peter 2:24) to save souls. "If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God" (1 Corinthians 3:18-20; also see 1:18-25).

Having carefully reviewed the account of the fall of man, we are able to see that in rebelling against God, Adam and Eve developed their souls to the extent of displacing their spirits and plunging themselves into darkness. The prominent parts of the soul are man's mind, will and emotion. Will is the organ of decision, therefore the master of the man. Mind is the organ of thought, while emotion is that of affection. The Apostle Paul tells us "Adam was not deceived," indicating that Adam's mind was not muddled on that fatal day. The one who was feeble minded was Eve: "the woman was deceived and became a transgressor" (1 Timothy 2:14). According to the record of Genesis it is written that "the woman said, 'The serpent beguiled me and I ate'" (Genesis 3:13); but that "the man said, 'The woman gave (not beguiled) me fruit of the tree and I ate'" (Genesis 3:12). Adam obviously was not deceived; his mind was clear and he knew the fruit was from the forbidden tree. He ate because of his affection for the woman. Adam understood that what the serpent said was nothing more than the enemy's deception. From the words of the Apostle we are led to see that Adam sinned deliberately. He loved Eve more than himself. He made her his idol, and for her sake he was willing to rebel against the commandment of his Creator. How pitiful that his mind was overruled by his emotion: his reasoning, overcome by his, affection. Why is it that men "did not believe the truth?" Because they "had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:12). It is not that the truth is unreasonable but that it is not loved. Hence when one truly turns to the Lord he "believes with his heart (not mind) and so is justified" (Romans 10:10).

Satan moved Adam to sin by seizing the latter's will through his emotion, while he tempted Eve to sin by grasping her will through the channel of a darkened mind. When

man's will and mind and emotion were poisoned by the serpent and man followed after Satan instead of God, his spirit, which was capable of communing with God, suffered a fatal blow. Here we can see the law which governs the work of Satan. He uses the things of the flesh (eating fruit) to entice man's soul into sin; as soon as the soul sins, the spirit descends into utter darkness. The order of his working is always such: from the outside to the inside. If he does not start with the body, then he begins by working on the mind or the emotion in order to get to the will of man. The moment man's will yields to Satan he possesses man's whole being and puts the spirit to death. But not so the work of God; His is always from the inside to the outside. God begins working in man's spirit and continues by illuminating his mind, stirring his emotion, and causing him to exercise his will over his body for carrying into execution the will of God. All satanic works are performed from the outside inward; all divine works, from the inside outward. We may in this way distinguish what comes from God and what from Satan. All this additionally teaches us that once Satan seizes man's will, then is he in control over that man.

We should carefully note that the soul is where man expresses his free will and exerts his own mastery. The Bible therefore often records that it is the soul which sins. For example, Micah 6:7 says, "the sin of my soul." Ezekiel 18:4, 20 reads, "the soul that sins." And in the books of Leviticus and Numbers mention frequently is made that the soul sins.

Why? Because it is the soul which chooses to sin. Our description of sin is: "The will acquiesces in the temptation." Sinning is a matter of the soul's will; atonement accordingly must be for the soul. "Ye give the heave offering of Jehovah to make atonement for your souls" (Exodus 30:15 Darby). "For the soul of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11 Darby). "To make atonement for our souls before Jehovah" (Numbers 31:50 Darby). Since it is the soul which sins, it follows that the soul needs to be atoned. And it can only be atoned, moreover, by a soul: "it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he bath subjected him to suffering ... thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin ... He shall see of the fruit of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied ... he bath poured out his soul unto death ... and be bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:10-12 Darby)

In examining the nature of Adam's sin we discover that aside from rebellion there is also a certain kind of independence. We must not lose sight here of free will. On the one hand, the tree of life implies a sense of *dependence*. Man at that time did not possess God's nature, but had he partaken of the fruit of the tree of life he could have secured God's life; man could have reached his summit - possessing the very life of God. This is dependence. On the other hand, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil suggests *independence* because man strived by the exercise of his will for the knowledge not promised, for something not accorded him by God. His rebellion declared his independence. By rebelling he did not need to depend upon God. Furthermore, his seeking the knowledge of good and evil also showed his independence, for he was not satisfied with what God had bestowed already. The difference between the spiritual and the soulish is crystal clear. The spiritual depends utterly upon God, fully satisfied with what God has given; the soulish steers clear of

God and covets what God has not conferred, especially “knowledge.” Independence is a special mark of the soulish. That thing, no matter how good, even worshiping God is unquestionably of the soul if it does not require complete trust in God and instead calls for reliance upon one’s own strength. The tree of life can not grow within us together with the tree of knowledge. Rebellion and independence explain every sin committed by both sinners and saints.

SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY AFTER THE FALL

Adam lived by the breath of life becoming spirit in him. By the spirit he sensed God, knew God’s voice, and communed with God. He had a very keen awareness of God. But after his fall his spirit died.

When God spoke to Adam at the first He said, “in the day that you eat of it (the fruit of the tree of good and evil) you shall die” (Genesis 2:17). Adam and Eve nevertheless continued on for hundreds of years after eating the forbidden fruit. This obviously indicates that the death God foretold was not physical. Adam’s death began in his spirit.

What really is death? According to its scientific definition death is “the cessation of communication with environment.” Death of the spirit is the cessation of its communication with God. Death of the body is the cutting off of communication between spirit and body. So when we say the spirit is dead it does not imply there is no more spirit; we simply mean the spirit has lost its sensitivity towards God and thus is dead to Him. The exact situation is that the spirit is incapacitated, unable to commune with God. To illustrate. A dumb person has a mouth and lungs but something is wrong with his vocal cords and he is powerless to speak. So far as human language is concerned his mouth may be considered dead. Similarly Adam’s spirit died because of his disobedience to God. He still had his spirit, yet it was dead to God for it had lost its spiritual instinct. It is still so; sin has destroyed the spirit’s keen intuitive knowledge of God and rendered man spiritually dead. He may be religious, moral, learned, capable, strong and wise, but he is dead to God. He may even talk about God, reason about God and preach God, but he is still dead to Him. Man is not able to hear or to sense the voice of God’s Spirit. Consequently in the New Testament God often refers to those who are living in the flesh as dead.

The death which began in our forefather’s spirit gradually spread until it reached his body. Though he lived on for many years after his spirit was dead, death nevertheless worked incessantly in him until his spirit, soul and body were all dead. His body, which could have been transformed and glorified, was instead returned to dust. Because his inward man had fallen into chaos, his outward body must die and be destroyed.

Henceforth Adam’s spirit (as well as the spirit of all his descendants) fell under the oppression of the soul until it gradually merged with the soul and the two parts became closely United. The writer of Hebrews declares in 4:12 that the Word of God shall pierce and divide soul and spirit. The dividing is necessary because spirit and soul have become one. While they are intimately knit they plunge man into a psychic world. Everything is done according to the dictates of intellect or feeling. The spirit has lost its power and sensation, as though dead asleep. What instinct it has in knowing and serving God is entirely paralysed. It remains in a coma as if non-existent. This is what

is meant in Jude 19 by “natural, not having spirit” (literal). This certainly does not mean the human spirit ceases to exist, for Numbers 16:22 distinctly states that God is “the God of the spirits of all flesh.” Every human being still has in his possession a spirit, although it is darkened by sin and impotent to hold communion with God.

However dead this spirit may be towards God it may remain as active as the mind or the body. It is accounted dead to God but is still very active in other respects. Sometimes the spirit of a fallen man can even be stronger than his soul or body and gain dominion over the whole being. Such persons are “spiritual” just as most people are largely soulful or physical, because their spirits are much bigger than that of ordinary individuals. These are the sorceresses and the witches. They indeed maintain contacts with the spiritual realm; but these do so through the evil spirit, not by the Holy Spirit. The spirit of the fallen man thus is allied with Satan and his evil spirits. It is dead to God yet very much alive to Satan and follows the evil spirit which is now at work in him.

In yielding to the demand of its passions and lusts the soul has become a slave to the body so that the Holy Spirit finds it useless to strive for God’s place in such a one. Hence the Scripture declares, “My Spirit shall not always plead with Man; for he indeed is flesh” (Genesis 6:3 Darby). The Bible refers to the flesh as the composite of the unregenerated soul and the physical life, though more often than not it points to sin which is in the body. Once man is completely under the dominion of the flesh he has no possibility of liberating himself. Soul has replaced the spirit’s authority. Everything is done independently and according to the dictates of his mind. Even in religious matters, in the hottest pursuit of God, all is carried on by the strength and will of man’s soul, void of the Holy Spirit’s revelation. The soul is not merely independent of the spirit; it is additionally under the body’s control. It is now asked to obey, to execute and to fulfil the lusts, passions and demands of the body. Every son of Adam is therefore not only dead in his spirit but he is also “from the earth, a man of dust” (1 Corinthians 15:47). Fallen men are governed completely by the flesh, walking in response to the desires of their soulful life and physical passions. Such ones are unable to commune with God. Sometimes they display their intellect, at others times their passion, but more often both their intellect and passion. Unimpeded, the flesh is in firm control over the total man.

This is what is unfolded in Jude 18-19: “Mockers, walking after their own lusts of ungodliness. These are they who set themselves apart, natural men, not having spirit” (Darby). Being soulful is antagonistic to being spiritual. The spirit, that noblest part of us, the part which may be united to God and ought to regulate the soul and body, is now under the dominion of the soul, that part of us which is earthly in both its motive and aim. The spirit has been stripped of its original position. Man’s present condition is abnormal. Wherefore he is pictured as not having spirit. The result of being soulful is that he becomes a mocker, pursuing ungodly passions and creating divisions.

1 Corinthians 2:14 speaks of such unregenerated persons in this fashion: “The natural (soulful) man does not receive the gifts of the spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” Such men as are under the control of their souls with their spirits suppressed are in direct contrast to spiritual people. They may be exceedingly intelligent, able to present masterful ideas

or theories, yet they do not consent to the things of the Spirit of God. They are unfit to receive revelation from the Holy Spirit. Such revelation is vastly different from human ideas. Man may think human intellect and reasoning are almighty, that the brain is able to comprehend all truths of the world; but the verdict of God's Word is, "vanity of vanities."

While man is in his soulish state he frequently senses the insecurity of this age and so he too seeks the eternal life of the coming age. But even if he does, he is still powerless to uncover the Word of life by his much thinking and theorising. How untrustworthy are human reasonings! We often observe how very clever persons clash in their different opinions. Theories easily lead man into error. They are castles in the air, tumbling him into eternal darkness.

How true it is that without the guidance of the Holy Spirit intellect not only is undependable but also extremely dangerous, because it often confuses the issue of right and wrong. A slight carelessness may cause not merely temporary loss but even everlasting harm. The darkened mind of man frequently leads him to eternal death. If only unregenerated souls could see this, how good it would be!

While man is fleshly he may be controlled by more than just the soul; he may be under the direction of the body as well; for soul and body are closely entwined. Because the body of sin is abounding in desires and passions, man may commit the most hideous of sins. As the body is formed of the dust, so its natural tendency is towards the earth. The introduction of the serpent's poison into man's body turns all its legitimate desires into lusts. Having once yielded to the body in disobeying God, the soul finds itself bound to yield every time. The base desires of the body may therefore often be expressed through the soul. The power of the body becomes so overwhelming that the soul can not but become the obedient slave.

God's thought is for the spirit to have the pre-eminence, ruling our soul. But once man turns fleshly his spirit sinks into servitude to the soul. Further degradation follows when man becomes "bodily" (of the body), for the basest body rises to be sovereign. Man has then descended from "spirit control" to "soul control," and from "soul control" to "body control." Deeper and deeper he sinks. How pitiful it must be when the flesh gains dominion.

Sin has slain the spirit: spiritual death hence becomes the portion of all, for all are dead in sins and trespasses. Sin has rendered the soul independent: the soulish life is therefore but a selfish and self-willed one. Sin has finally empowered the body: sinful nature accordingly reigns through the body.

CHAPTER FOUR

SALVATION

CALVARY'S JUDGMENT

Death entered the world through the fall of man. Reference here is to spiritual death which separates man from God. Through sin it came in the beginning and so has it ever come since then. Death always comes through sin. Note what Romans 5:12 tells us about this matter. First, that "sin came into the world through one man." Adam sinned and introduced sin into the world. Second, that "death (came into the world) through sin." Death is sin's unchanging result. And lastly, that therefore "death spread to all men because all men sinned." Not merely has death "spread to" or "passed upon" (Darby) all men, but literally "to all men the death did pass through" (Young's). Death has permeated the spirit, soul and body of all men; there is no part of a human being into which it has not found its way. It is therefore imperative that man receive God's life. The way of salvation can not be in human reform, for "death" is irreparable. Sin must be judged before there can be rescue out of death. Exactly this is what has been provided by the salvation of the Lord Jesus.

The man who sins must die. This is announced in the Bible. No animal nor angel can suffer the penalty of sin in man's stead. It is man's triune nature which sins, therefore it is man who must die. Only humanity can atone for humanity. But because sin is in his humanity, man's own death can not atone for his sin. The Lord Jesus came and took human nature upon himself in order that He might be judged instead of humanity. Untainted by sin, His holy human nature could therefore through death atone for sinful humanity. He died a substitute, suffered all penalty of sin, and offered his life a ransom for many. Consequently, whoever believes on Him shall be judged no more (John 5:24).

When the Word became flesh He included all flesh in Himself. As the action of one man, Adam, represents the action of all mankind, so the work of one man, Christ, represents the work of all. We must see how inclusive Christ is before we can understand what redemption is. Why is it that the sin of one man, Adam, is judged to be the sin of all men both present and past? Because Adam is humanity's head from whom all other men have come into the world. Similarly the obedience of one man, Christ, becomes the righteousness of many, both of the present and the past, inasmuch as Christ constitutes the head of a new mankind entered into by a new birth.

One incident in Hebrews 7 may illustrate this point. To prove that the priesthood of Melchizedek is greater than the priesthood of Levi, the writer reminds his readers that Abraham once offered a tithe to Melchizedek and received from him a blessing and so concluded that Abraham's tithe offering and blessing were Levi's. How? Because "he (Levi) was still in the loins of his ancestor (Abraham) when Melchizedek met him" (Hebrews 7:10). We know that Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac Jacob, and Jacob Levi. Levi was Abraham's great grandson. When Abraham offered the tithe and received a blessing, Levi was not yet born, nor even were his father and grandfather. Yet the Bible considers Abraham's tithe and blessing as Levi's. Inasmuch as Abraham is lesser than Melchizedek, Levi too is of less account than Melchizedek. This incident can help us to understand why Adam's sin is construed to be the sin of all men and why the

judgment upon Christ is counted as judgment for all. It is simply because at the time Adam sinned, all men were presently in his loins. Likewise, when Christ was judged, all who will be regenerated were present in Christ. His judgment is hence taken as their judgment, and all who have believed in Christ shall no longer be judged. Since humanity must be judged, the Son of God - even the man Jesus Christ - suffered in his spirit, soul and body on the cross for the sins of the world.

Let us first consider his physical sufferings. Man sins through his body and there enjoys the temporary pleasure of sin. The body must accordingly be the recipient of punishment. Who can fathom the physical sufferings of the Lord Jesus on the cross? Are not Christ's sufferings in the body clearly foretold in the Messianic writings? "They have pierced my hands and feet" (Psalm 22:16). The prophet Zechariah called attention to "him whom they have pierced" (Zechariah 12:10). His hands, His feet, His brow, His side, His heart were all pierced by men, pierced by sinful humanity and pierced for sinful humanity. Many were His wounds and high ran His fever for, with the weight of His whole body hanging unsupported on the cross, His blood could not circulate freely. He was extremely thirsty and therefore cried out, "My tongue cleaves to my jaws" - "for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Psalm 22:15; 69:21). The hands must be nailed, for they love to sin. The mouth must suffer, for it loves to sin. The feet must be pierced, for they love to sin. The brow must be crowned with a thorny crown, for it too loves to sin. All that the human body needed to suffer was executed upon His body. Thus He suffered physically even to death. It was within His power to escape these sufferings, yet He willingly offered His body to endure immeasurable trials and pains, never for a moment shrinking back until He knew that "all was now finished" (John 19:28). Only then did He dismiss his spirit.

Not His body only, His soul as well, suffered. The soul is the organ of self-consciousness. Before being crucified, Christ was administered wine mingled with myrrh as a sedative to alleviate pain, but He refused it as He was not willing to lose His consciousness. Human souls have fully enjoyed the pleasure of sins; accordingly in His soul Jesus would endure the pain of sins. He would rather drink the cup given Him by God than the cup which numbed consciousness.

How shameful is the punishment of the cross! It was used to execute runaway slaves. A slave had neither property nor rights. His body belonged to his master; he could therefore be punished with the most shameful cross. The Lord Jesus took the place of a slave and was crucified. Isaiah called Him "the servant"; Paul said He took the form of a slave. Yes, as a slave He came to rescue us who are subject to the lifelong bondage of sin and Satan. We are slaves to passion, temper, habits and the world. We are sold to sin. Yet He died because of our slavery and bore our entire shame.

The Bible records that the soldiers took the garments of the Lord Jesus (John 19:23). He was nearly naked when crucified. This is one of the shames of the cross. Sin takes our radiant garment away and renders us naked. Our Lord was stripped bare before Pilate and again on Calvary. How would His holy soul react to such abuse? Would it not insult the holiness of His personality and cover Him with shamefulness? Who can enter into His feeling of that tragic moment? Because every man had enjoyed the apparent glory of sin, so the Saviour must endure the real shame of sin. Truly "thou (God) hast covered him with shame ... with which thy enemies taunt, O Lord, with

which they mock the footsteps of thy anointed"; He nonetheless "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Psalm 89:45, 51; Hebrews 12:2).

No one can ever ascertain how fully the soul of the Saviour suffered on the cross. We often contemplate His physical suffering but overlook the feeling of His soul. A week before the Passover He was heard to mention: "Now is my soul troubled" (John 12:27). This points to the cross. While in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus was again heard to say: "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death" (Matthew 26:38). Were it not for these words we would hardly think his soul had suffered. Isaiah 53 mentions thrice how His soul was made an offering for sin, how His soul travailed, and how He poured out His soul to death (Isaiah 53:10-12). Because Jesus bore the curse and shame of the cross, whoever believes in Him shall no more be cursed and put to shame.

His spirit too suffered immensely. The spirit is that part of man which equips him to commune with God. The Son of God was holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners. His spirit was united with the Holy Spirit in perfect oneness. Never did there exist a moment of disturbance and doubt, for He always had God's presence with Him. "It is not I alone," declared Jesus, "but I and he who sent me ... And he who sent me is with me" (John 8:16, 29). For this reason He could pray, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. I knew that thou Nearest me always" (John 11:41-42). Nevertheless, while He hung on the cross - and if there ever were a day when the Son of God desperately needed the presence of God it must be that day - He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46) His spirit was split asunder from God. How intensely He felt the loneliness, the desertion, the separation. The Son was still yielding, the Son was still obeying the will of the Father God, yet the Son was forsaken: not for His Own sake, but for the sake of others.

Sin affects most deeply the spirit; consequently, holy as the Son of God was, still He had to be wrenched away from the Father because He bore the sin of others. It is true that in the countless days of eternity past "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Even during His days of earthly sojourn this remained true, for His humanity could not be a cause of separation from God. Sin alone could separate: even though that sin be the sin of others. Jesus suffered this spiritual separation for us in order that our spirit could return to God.

When he surveyed the death of Lazarus, Jesus might have been thinking of His Own approaching death, and so "he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled" (John 11:33). Upon announcing that He would be betrayed and die on the cross, He was again "troubled in spirit" (John 13:21). This tells us why, when He received God's judgment on Calvary, He cried out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" For "I think of God and I moan; I meditate, and my spirit faints" (Matthew 27:46; echoing Psalm 22:1; 77:3). He was deprived of the mighty strengthening through the Holy Spirit in His spirit (Ephesians 3:16) because His spirit was torn away from the Spirit of God. Therefore He sighed, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; thou dost lay me in the dust of death" (Psalm 22:14-15).

On the one side, the Holy Spirit of God deserted Him; on the other, the evil spirit of Satan mocked him. It seems apparent that Psalm 22:11-13 refers to this phase: "Be not

far from me ... there is none to help. Many bulls encompass me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me; they opened wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.”

His spirit endured God’s desertion on the one side and resisted the evil spirit’s derision on the other. Man’s human spirit has so separated itself from God, exalted itself, and followed the evil spirit that man’s spirit must be totally broken in order that it may no longer resist God and remain allied with the enemy. The Lord Jesus became sin for us on the cross. His inner holy humanity was completely smashed as God passed judgment upon unholy humanity. Forsaken by God, Christ thus suffered sin’s bitterest pain, enduring in darkness the punitive wrath of God on sin without the support of the love of God or the light of His countenance. To be forsaken by God is the consequence of sin.

Now our sinful humanity has been judged completely because it was judged in the sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus. In Him, holy humanity has won its victory. Whatever judgment should come upon the body, soul and spirit of sinners has been poured upon Him. He is our representative. By faith we are joined to Him. His death is reckoned as our death, and His judgment as our judgment. Our spirit, soul and body have altogether been judged and penalised in Him. It would not be any different had we been punished in person. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

This is what He has accomplished for us and such is now our standing before God. “For he who has died is freed from sin” (Romans 6:7). Positionally we already have died in the Lord Jesus; it only awaits the Holy Spirit to translate this fact into our experience. The cross is where the sinner - spirit, soul and body - is altogether judged. It is through the death and resurrection of the Lord that the Holy Spirit of God is able to impart God’s nature to us. The cross bears the sinner’s judgment, proclaims the sinner’s worthlessness, crucifies the sinner, and releases the life of the Lord Jesus. Henceforth anyone who accepts the cross shall be born anew by the Holy Spirit and receive the life of the Lord Jesus.

REGENERATION

The concept of regeneration as found in the Bible speaks of the process of passing out of death into life. A man’s spirit before regeneration is far away from God and is considered dead, for death is dissociation from life and from God Who is the fountain of life. Death is hence separation from God. Man’s spirit is dead and therefore unable to commune with Him. Either his soul controls him and plunges him into a life of ideas and imaginations, or the lusts and habits of his body stimulate him and reduce his soul to servitude.

Man’s spirit needs to be quickened because it is born dead. The new birth which the Lord Jesus spoke about to Nicodemus is the new birth of the spirit. It certainly is not a physical birth as Nicodemus suspected, nor is it a soulical one. We must note carefully that new birth imparts God’s life to the spirit of man. Inasmuch as Christ has atoned for our soul and destroyed the principle of the flesh, so we who are joined to Him participate in His resurrection life. We have been united with Him in His death; consequently it is in our spirit that we first reap the realisation of His resurrection life.

New birth is something which happens entirely within the spirit; it has no relation to soul or body.

What makes man unique in God's creation is not that he possesses a soul but that he has a spirit which, joined to the soul, constitutes the man. Such union marks out man as extraordinary in the universe. Man's soul is not related directly to God; according to the Bible, it is his spirit that relates itself to God. God is Spirit; all who worship Him, therefore, must worship in spirit. It alone can commune with God. Only spirit can worship Spirit. We thus find in the Bible such statements as: "serving with my spirit" (Romans 1:9; 7:6; 12:11); "knowing through the spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:9-12); "worshiping in spirit" (John 4:23-24; Philippians 3:3); "receiving in spirit the revelation of God" (Revelation 1:10; 1 Corinthians 2:10).

In view of this fact, let us remember that God has ordained He will deal with man through his spirit alone and that by man's spirit His counsels are to be realised. If such be the case, how necessary for the spirit of man to continue in constant and living union with God, without for a moment being affected into disobeying divine laws by following the feelings, desires, and ideals of the outward soul. Otherwise, death shall set in immediately; the spirit will be denied its union with God's life. This does not signify that man would no longer have a spirit. It simply means, as we have discussed previously, that the spirit would abdicate its lofty position to the soul. Whenever a person's inner man heeds the dictates of the outer man, he loses contact with God and is rendered dead spiritually. "You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked" by "following the desires of body and mind" (Ephesians 2:1-3).

The life of an unregenerated person almost entirely is governed by the soul. He may be living in fear, curiosity, joy, pride, pity, pleasure, delight, wonder, shame, love, remorse, elation. Or he may be full of ideals, imaginations, superstitions, doubts, suppositions, inquiries, inductions, deductions, analyses, introspections. Or he may be moved by the desire for power, wealth, social recognition, freedom, position, fame, praise, knowledge - into making many daring decisions, into personally arbitrating, into voicing stubborn opinions, or even into undergoing patient endurance. All these and other like things are merely manifestations of the soul's three main functions of emotion, mind and will. Is not life composed pre-eminently of these matters? But regeneration can never arise out of these. To be penitent, to feel sorry for sin, to shed tears, to even make decisions does not bring in salvation. Confession, decision, and many other religious acts can never be and are not to be construed as new birth.

Rational judgment, intelligent understanding, mental acceptance, or the pursuit of the good, the beautiful, and the true are merely soulical activities if the spirit is not reached and stirred. Although they may serve well as servants, man's ideas, feelings and choices can not serve as masters and are consequently secondary in this matter of salvation. The Bible hence never regards new birth as being severity to the body, impulsive feeling, the demand of the will, or reform through mental understanding. The Biblical new birth occurs in an area far deeper than human body and soul, yea, even in man's spirit, where he receives God's life through the Holy Spirit.

The writer of Proverbs tells us that "the spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord" (Proverbs 20:27). During the time of regeneration the Holy Spirit comes into man's spirit and quickens it as though kindling a lamp. This is the "new spirit" mentioned in

Ezekiel 36:26; the dead old spirit is quickened into life when the Holy Spirit infuses it with God's uncreated life.

Before regeneration the soul of man is in control of his spirit while his own "self" rules his soul and his passion governs his body. Soul has become the life of the body. At regeneration man receives God's Own life into his spirit and is born of God. As a consequence, the Holy Spirit now rules man's spirit which in turn is equipped to regain control over the soul and, through the soul, to govern his body. Because the Holy Spirit becomes the like of man's spirit, the latter becomes the life of man's whole being. The spirit, soul and body are restored to God's original intention in every born again person.

What then must one do to be born anew in one's spirit? We know that the Lord Jesus died in the sinner's place. He suffered in His body on the cross for all the sins of the world. God views the death of the Lord Jesus as the death of all the world's people. His holy humanity suffered death for all unholy humanity. But something does remain for man himself to do. He must exercise faith in committing himself - spirit, soul and body - into union with the Lord Jesus. That is to say, he must reckon the death of the Lord Jesus as his own death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as his own resurrection. This is the meaning of John 3:16: "Whoever believes into (literal) him should not perish but have eternal life." The sinner must exercise faith and a believing into the Lord Jesus. By so doing, he is united with Him in His death and resurrection and receives eternal life (John 17:3) - which is spiritual life - unto regeneration.

Let us be careful not to separate into distinct matters the death of the Lord Jesus as our substitute and our death with Him. Those who stress mental understanding will surely so do, but in spiritual life these two are inseparable. Substitutionary death and co-death should be distinguished but never separated. If one believes in the death of the Lord Jesus as his substitute he already has been united with the Lord Jesus in His death (Romans 6:2). For me to believe in the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus is to believe that I already have been punished in the Lord Jesus. The penalty of my sin is death; yet the Lord Jesus suffered death for me; therefore I have died in Him. There can be no salvation otherwise. To say that He died for me is to say that I already have been penalised and have died in Him. Everyone who believes in this fact shall experience its reality.

We may say then that the faith by which a sinner believes in the death of the Lord Jesus as substitute is "believing into" Christ and thus union with Him. Though a person may be concerned only with the penalty for sin and not with the power of sin, his being united with the Lord is nonetheless the common possession he shares with all who believe in Christ.

He who is not united with the Lord has not yet believed and therefore has no part in Him.

In believing, one is united with the Lord. To be united with Him means to experience everything He has experienced. In John 3 our Lord informs us how we are united with Him. It is by our being united with Him in His crucifixion and death (John 3:14-15). Every believer at least positionally has been united with the Lord in His death, but obviously "if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be

united with him in a resurrection like his” (Romans 6:5). Hence he who believes in the death of the Lord Jesus as his substitute is likewise positionally raised up with Christ. Though he may not yet fully experience the meaning of the death of the Lord Jesus, God nevertheless has made him alive together with Christ and he has obtained a new life in the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus. This is new birth.

We should beware lest we insist that a man is not born anew unless he has experienced death and resurrection with the Lord. The Scriptures deem anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus as already regenerated. “All who received him, who believed in his name ... were ... born of God” (John 1:12-13). Let it be understood that to be raised together with the Lord is not an experience antecedent to the new birth. Our regeneration is our union with the Lord in His resurrection as well as in His death. His death has concluded our sinful walk, and His resurrection has given us a new life and initiated us into the life of a Christian. The Apostle assures us that “we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). He indicates that every born-again Christian has been resurrected already with the Lord. However, the Apostle Paul in Philippians still urges us to experience “the power of His resurrection” (Philippians 3:10). Many Christians have been born anew and been thus raised with the Lord, even though they are lacking in the manifestation of resurrection power.

Do not confuse, then, position with experience. At the time one believes in the Lord Jesus he may be most weak and ignorant; he is nonetheless placed by God in the perfect position of being considered dead, raised and ascended with the Lord. He who is accepted in Christ is as acceptable as Christ is his position. And his position is: all that Christ has experienced is his. And position causes him to experience new birth, because it hinges not on how deep he has known experimentally the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus, but on whether he has believed in Him. Even if experimentally a believer is totally ignorant of the resurrection power of Christ (Philippians 3:10), he has been made alive together with Christ, raised up with Him and seated with Him in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:5-6).

Still another matter should be carefully noticed with respect to regeneration; namely, that far more became ours than simply what we had in Adam before the fall. On that day Adam possessed spirit; yet it was created by God. It was not God’s uncreated life typified by the tree of life. No life relationship existed at all between Adam and God. His being called “the son of God” is similar to the angels being so called, for he was created directly by God. We who believe in the Lord Jesus, however, are “born of God” (John 1:12-13). Accordingly, there is a life relationship. A child born inherits his father’s life; we are born of God; therefore, we have His life (2 Peter 1:4). Had Adam received the life which God offered in the tree of life, he immediately would have obtained the eternal uncreated life of God. His spirit came from God, and so it is everlasting. How this everlasting spirit shall live depends upon how one regards God’s order and upon what choice he makes. The life we Christians obtain in regeneration is the same which Adam could have had but never had: God’s life. Regeneration not only retrieves out of chaotic darkness the order of man’s spirit and soul; it additionally affords man the supernatural life of God.

Man's darkened and fallen spirit is made alive through being strengthened by the Holy Spirit into accepting God's life. This is new birth. The basis upon which the Holy Spirit can regenerate man is the cross (John 3:14-15). The eternal life declared in John 3:16 is the life of God which the Holy Spirit plants in man's spirit. Since this life is God's and can not die, it follows that everyone born anew into possessing this life is said to have eternal life. As God's life is totally unfamiliar with death, so the eternal life in man never dies.

A life relationship is established with God in new birth. It resembles the old birth of the flesh in that it is once and for all. Once a man is born of God he can never be treated by God as not having been so born of Him. However endless eternity may be, this relationship and this position can not be annulled. This is because what a believer receives at new birth is not contingent upon a progressive, spiritual and holy pursuit after he believes but is the pure gift of God. What God bestows is eternal life. No possibility exists for this life and position to be abrogated.

Receiving God's life in new birth is the starting point of a Christian walk, the minimum for a believer. Those who have not yet believed on the death of the Lord Jesus and received supernatural life (which they can not possess naturally), are deemed in the sight of God to be dead, no matter how religious, moral, learned or zealous they may be. Those who do not have God's life are dead.

For those who are born anew, there is great potentiality for spiritual growth. Regeneration is the obvious first step in spiritual development. Though the life received is perfect, it waits to be matured. At the moment of new birth life can not be full-grown. It is like a fruit newly formed: the life is perfect but it is still unripe. There is therefore boundless possibility for growth. The Holy Spirit is able to bring the person into complete victory over body and soul.

TWO KINDS OF CHRISTIANS

The Apostle in 1 Corinthians 3:1 divides all Christians into two classifications. They are the spiritual and the carnal. A spiritual Christian is one in whom the Holy Spirit dwells in his spirit and controls his entire being. What is meant, then, by being carnal? The Bible employs the word "flesh" to describe the life and value of an unregenerated man. It comprises everything which issues from his sinful soul and body (Romans 7:19). Hence a carnal Christian is one who has been born anew and has God's life, but instead of overcoming his flesh he is overcome by the flesh. We know the spirit of a fallen man is dead and he is dominated by his soul and body. A carnal Christian, therefore, is one whose spirit has been quickened, but who still follows his soul and body unto sin.

If a Christian remains in a carnal condition long after experiencing new birth, he hinders God's salvation from realising its full potential and manifestation. Only when he is growing in grace, constantly governed by the spirit, can salvation be wholly wrought in him. God has provided full salvation in Calvary for the regeneration of sinners and complete victory over the believer's old creation.

PART TWO

THE FLESH

CHAPTER ONE

THE FLESH AND SALVATION

The word “flesh” is *basar* in Hebrew and *sarx* in Greek. Seen often in the Bible, it is used in various ways. Its most significant usage, observed and made most clear in Paul’s writings, has reference to the unregenerated person. Speaking of his old “I” he says in Romans 7: “I am fleshly” (Romans 7:14 Darby). Not merely his nature or a particular part of his being is fleshly; the “I” - Paul’s whole being - is fleshly. He reiterates this thought in verse 18 by asserting “within me, that is, in my flesh.” It follows clearly that “flesh” in the Bible points to all an unregenerated person is. In connection with this usage of “flesh” it must be remembered that in the very beginning man was constituted spirit, soul and body. As it is the site of man’s personality and consciousness, the soul is connected to the spiritual world through man’s spirit. The soul must decide whether it is to obey the spirit and hence be united with God and His will or is to yield to the body and all the temptations of the material world. On the occasion of man’s fall the soul resisted the spirit’s authority and became enslaved to the body and its passions. Thus man became a fleshly, not a spiritual, man. Man’s spirit was denied its noble position and was reduced to that of a prisoner. Since the soul is now under the power of the flesh, the Bible deems man to be fleshly or carnal. Whatever is soulical has become fleshly.

Now aside from the use of “flesh” to designate all that an unregenerated person is, sometimes it is written to denote the soft part of the human body as distinct from blood and bones. It may be employed to mean additionally the human body. Or at still other times it may be used to signify the totality of mankind. These four meanings are all very closely related. We should therefore note briefly these other three ways of using “flesh” in the Bible.

First, “flesh” as applied to the soft part of the human body. We know that a human body is composed of flesh, bones and blood. Flesh is that part of the body through which we sense the world around us. Therefore a fleshly person is one who follows the world. Beyond simply having flesh, he walks after the sense of his flesh.

Second, “flesh” as applied to the human body. Broadly speaking, flesh means the human body whether living or dead. According to the latter part of Romans 7 sin of the flesh is related to the human body: “I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members” (Romans 7:23). The Apostle then continues in Chapter 8 by explaining that if we would overcome the flesh we must “put to death the deeds of the body” by the Spirit (Romans 8:13). Hence, the Bible uses the word *sarx* to indicate not only psychical flesh but physical flesh as well.

Third, “flesh” as applied to the totality of mankind. All men in this world are born of the flesh; they are all therefore fleshly. Without exception the Bible views all men to be flesh. Every man is controlled by that composite of soul and body called the flesh, following both the sins of his body and the self of his soul. Thus whenever the Bible speaks of all men its characteristic phrase is “all flesh.” *Basar* or *sarx* consequently refers to human beings *in total*.

HOW DOES MAN BECOME FLESH?

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” So asserted the Lord Jesus to Nicodemus long ago (John 3:6). Three questions are answered by this succinct statement: (1) what flesh is; (2) how man becomes flesh; and (3) what its quality or nature is.

(1) What is flesh? “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” What is born of the flesh? Man; therefore man is flesh; and everything a man naturally inherits from his parents belongs to the flesh. No distinction is made as to whether the man is good, moral, clever, able and kind or whether he is bad, unholy, foolish; useless and cruel. Man is flesh. Whatever a man is born with pertains to the flesh and is within that realm. All with which we are born or which later develops is included in the flesh.

(2) How does man become flesh? “That which is *born* of the flesh is flesh.” Man does not become fleshly by learning to be bad through gradual sinning, nor by giving himself up to licentiousness, greedy to follow the desire of his body and mind until finally the whole man is overcome and controlled by the evil passions of his body. The Lord Jesus emphatically declared that as soon as a man is born he is fleshly. He is determined neither by his conduct nor by his character. But one thing decides the issue: through whom was he born? Every man of this world has been begotten of human parents and is consequently judged by God to be of the flesh (Genesis 6:3). How can anyone who is born of the flesh not be flesh? According to our Lord’s word, a man is flesh because he is born of blood, of the will of the flesh, and of the will of man (John 1:13) and not because of how he lives or how his parents live.

(3) What is the nature of flesh? “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Here is no exception, no distinction. No amount of education, improvement, cultivation, morality or religion can turn man from being fleshly. No human labour or power can alter him. Unless he is not generated of the flesh, he will remain as flesh. No human device can make him other than that of which he was born. The Lord Jesus said “is”; with that the matter was forever decided. The fleshliness of a man is determined not by himself but by his birth. If he is born of flesh, all plans for his transformation will be unavailing. No matter how he changes outwardly, whether from one form to another or through a daily change, man remains flesh as firmly as ever.

THE UNREGENERATED MAN

The Lord Jesus has stated that any unregenerated person born but once (i.e., born only of man), is flesh and is therefore living in the realm of the flesh. During the period we were unregenerated we indeed “lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” because “it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God” (Ephesians 2:3; Romans 9:8). A man whose soul may yield to the lusts of the body and commit many unmentionable sins may be so dead to God (Ephesians 2:1) - “dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of ... flesh” (Colossians 2:13) - that he may have no consciousness of being sinful. On the contrary he may even be proud, considering himself better than others. Frankly speaking, “while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death” for the simple reason that we were “carnal, sold under sin.” We therefore with our flesh “serve the law of sin” (Romans 7:5, 14, 25).

Although the flesh is exceedingly strong in sinning and following selfish desire it is extremely weak towards the will of God. Unregenerated man is powerless to fulfil any of God's will, being "weakened by the flesh." And the flesh is even "hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it can not" (Romans 8:3, 7). This however does not imply that the flesh totally disregards the things of God. The fleshly sometimes do exert their utmost strength to observe the law. The Bible moreover never treats the fleshly as synonymous with the law breakers. It merely concludes that "by works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16 ASV). For the fleshly not to keep the law is certainly nothing unusual. It simply proves they are of the flesh. But now that God has ordained that man shall not be justified by works of law but by faith in the Lord Jesus (Romans 3:28), those who attempt to follow the law only disclose their disobedience to God, seeking to establish their own righteousness in lieu of God's righteousness (Romans 10:3). It reveals further that they belong to the flesh. To sum up, "those who are in the flesh can not please God" (Romans 8:8), and this "can not" seals the fate of the fleshly.

God looks upon the flesh as utterly corrupt. So closely is it linked with lust that the Bible often refers to "the lusts of the flesh" (2 Peter 2:18 Darby). Great though His power, God nonetheless can not transform the nature of the flesh into something pleasing to Himself. God Himself declares: "My spirit shall not always strive in man forever, for he is flesh" (Genesis 6:3 Young's). The corruption of the flesh is such that even the Holy Spirit of God can not by striving against the flesh render it unleshly. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Man unfortunately does not understand God's Word and so he tries continually to refine and reform his flesh. Yet the Word of God stands forever. Due to its exceeding corruption, God warns His saints to hate "even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23).

Because God appreciates the actual condition of the flesh He declares it is unchangeable. Any person who attempts to repair it by acts of self-abasement or severity to the body shall fail utterly. God recognises the impossibility of the flesh to be changed, improved or bettered. In saving the world, therefore, He does not try to alter man's flesh; He instead gives man a new life in order to help put it to death. The flesh must die. This is salvation.

GOD'S SALVATION

"God," asserts the Apostle, "has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). This uncovers the actual situation of that moral class of the fleshly who may perhaps be very much intent on keeping the law. They may indeed be observing quite a few of its points. Weakened by the flesh, however, they can not keep the whole law. For the law makes it quite clear that "he who does them shall live by them" (Galatians 3:12; quoting Leviticus 18:5) or else he shall be condemned to perdition. How much of the law, someone may ask, shall he keep? The entire law; for "whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it" (James 2:10). "For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law since through the law comes knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). The more one desires to observe the law the more he discovers how full of sin he is and how impossible for him to keep it.

God's reaction to the sinfulness of all men is to take upon Himself the task of salvation. His way is in "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." His Son is without sin, hence He alone is qualified to save us. "In the likeness of sinful flesh" describes His incarnation: how He takes a human body and links Himself with mankind. God's only Son is referred to elsewhere as "the Word" that "became flesh" (John 1:14). His coming in the likeness of sinful flesh is the "became flesh" of that verse. Therefore our verse in Romans 8:3 tells us as well in what manner the Word became flesh. The emphasis here is that He is the Son of God, consequently sinless. Even when He comes in the flesh, God's Son does not become "sinful flesh." He only comes in "the *likeness* of sinful flesh." While in the flesh, He remains as the Son of God and is still without sin. Yet because He possesses the likeness of sinful flesh, He is most closely joined with the world's sinners who live in the flesh.

What then is the purpose of His incarnation? As a "sacrifice for sins" is the Biblical explanation (Hebrews 10:12), and this is the work of the cross. God's Son is to atone for our sins. All the fleshly sin against the law; they can not establish the righteousness of God; and they are doomed to perdition and punishment. But the Lord Jesus in coming to the world takes this likeness of sinful flesh and joins Himself so perfectly with the fleshly that they have been punished for their sin in His death on the cross. He need not suffer for He is without sin, yet He does suffer because He has the likeness of sinful flesh. In the position of a new federal head, the Lord Jesus now includes all sinners in His suffering. This explains the punishment for sin.

Christ as the sacrifice for sin suffers for everyone who is in the flesh. But what about the power of sin which fills the fleshly? "He condemned sin in the flesh." He who is sinless is made sin for us, so that He dies for sin. He is "Put to death in the flesh" (1 Peter 3:18). When He dies in the flesh, He takes to the cross the sin in the flesh. This is what is meant by the phrase "condemned sin in the flesh." To condemn is to judge or to mete out punishment. The judgment and punishment of sin is death. Thus the Lord Jesus actually put sin to death in His flesh. We therefore can see in His death that not only our *sins* are judged but *sin itself* is even judged. Henceforth sin has no power upon those who are joined to the Lord's death and who accordingly have sin condemned in their flesh.

REGENERATION

God's release from the penalty and power of sin is accomplished in the cross of His Son. He now lays before all men this salvation so that whoever wills to accept may be saved. God knows no good resides in man; no flesh can please Him. It is corrupted beyond repair. Since it is so absolutely hopeless, how then can man please God after he has believed in His Son unless He gives him something new? Thank God, He has bestowed a new life, His uncreated life, upon those who believe in the salvation of the Lord Jesus and receive Him as their personal Saviour. This is called "regeneration" or "new birth." Though He can not alter our flesh God gives us His life. Man's flesh remains as corrupt in those who are born anew as in those who are not. The flesh in a saint is the same as that in a sinner. In regeneration the flesh is not transformed. New birth exerts no good influence on the flesh. It remains as is. God does not impart His life to us to educate and train the flesh. Rather, it is given to overcome the flesh.

Man in regeneration actually becomes related to God by birth. Regeneration means to be born of God. As our fleshy life is born of our parents so our spiritual life is born of God. The meaning of birth is “to impart life.” When we say we are born of God it signifies we receive a new life from Him. What we have received is a real life.

We have seen previously how we human beings are fleshly. Our spirit is dead and our soul is in full management of the entire being. We are walking according to the lusts of the body. No good is in us, In coming to deliver us, God first must restore the spirit’s position within in order that we may have fellowship with Him again. This occurs when we believe in the Lord Jesus. God puts His life into our spirit, thus raising it up from death. The Lord Jesus now declares that “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). At this juncture God’s life, which is the Spirit, enters our human spirit and restores it to its original position. The Holy Spirit takes up His abode in the human spirit; and man is thereby transferred into the spiritual realm. Our spirit is quickened and reigns once again. The “new spirit” mentioned in Ezekiel 36:26 is the new life we receive at the time of regeneration.

Man is not regenerated by doing something special but by believing the Lord Jesus as his Saviour: “to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13). Those who believe the Lord Jesus as Saviour are born of God and are therefore His children.

Regeneration is the minimum of spiritual life. It is the basis upon which later building up takes place. One can neither speak of spiritual life nor expect to grow spiritually if he is not regenerated, since he has no life in his spirit. Just as no one can construct a castle in the air so we can not edify those who are unregenerated. If we attempt to teach an unregenerate to do good and to worship God, we are simply teaching a dead man. We are attempting to do what God can not do when we try to repair and reform the flesh. It is vital that each believer know beyond doubt he has been regenerated already and has received a new life. He must see that new birth is not an attempt to tinker with the old flesh or to transform it into spiritual life. On the contrary, it is receiving a life which he never had and could not have had before. If one is not born anew he can not see the kingdom of God. He can never perceive the spiritual mysteries and taste the heavenly sweetness of God’s kingdom. His destination is but to wait for death and judgment; for him there is nothing more.

How can one know he is regenerated? John tells us man is born anew by his believing on the name of the Son of God and receiving Him (John 1:12). The name of God’s Son is “Jesus” which means “he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Believing on the name of the Son of God is hence equivalent to believing in Him as the Saviour, believing that He died on the cross for our sins in order to free us from the penalty and power of sin. To so believe is to receive Him as Saviour. If one desires to know whether he is regenerated or not, he simply need ask himself one question: Have I come to the cross as a helpless sinner and received the Lord Jesus as Saviour? If he answers affirmatively he is regenerated. All who believe in the Lord Jesus are born anew.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW

It is essential for a regenerated person to understand what he has obtained through new birth and what still lingers

of his natural endowment. Such knowledge will help him as he continues his spiritual journey. It may prove helpful at this point to explain how much is included in man's flesh and likewise how the Lord Jesus in His redemption deals with the constituents of that flesh. In other words, what does a believer inherit in regeneration?

A reading of several verses in Romans 7 can make clear that the components of the flesh are mainly "sin" and "me": "sin that dwells in me ..., that is, in my flesh" (Romans 7:14, 17-18 Darby). The "sin" here is the power of sin, and the "me" here is what we commonly acknowledge as "self." If a believer would understand spiritual life he must not be confused about these two elements of the flesh.

We know the Lord Jesus has dealt with the sin of our flesh on His cross. And the Word informs us that "our old self was crucified with him" (Romans 6:6). Nowhere in the Bible are we told to be crucified since this has been done and done perfectly by Christ already. With regard to the question of sin, man is not required to do anything. He need only consider this an accomplished fact (Romans 6:11) and he will reap the effectiveness of the death of Jesus in being wholly delivered from the power of sin (Romans 6.14).

We are never asked in the Bible to be crucified for sin, that is true. It *does* exhort us, however, to take up the cross for denying self. The Lord Jesus instructs us many times, to deny ourselves and take up the cross and follow Him. The explanation for this is that the Lord Jesus deals with our sins and with ourselves very differently. To wholly conquer sin the believer needs but a moment; to deny the self he needs an entire lifetime. Only on the cross did Jesus *bear* our sins; yet throughout His life the Lord *denied* Himself. The same must be true of us.

The Galatian letter of Paul delineates the relationship between the flesh and the believer. He tells us on the one hand that "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24). On the very day one becomes identified with the Lord Jesus then his flesh also is crucified. Now one might think, without the Holy Spirit's instruction, that his flesh is no longer present, for has it not been crucified? But no, on the other hand the letter says to us to "Walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh" (Galatians 5:16-17). Here we are told openly that one who belongs to Christ Jesus and has already the indwelling Holy Spirit still has the flesh in him. Not only does the flesh exist; it is described as being singularly powerful as well.

What can we say? Are these two Biblical references contradictory? No, verse 24 stresses the sin of the flesh, while verse 17 the self of the flesh. The cross of Christ deals with sin and the Holy Spirit through the cross treats of self. Christ delivers the believer completely from the power of sin through the cross that sin may not reign again; but by the Holy Spirit Who dwells in the believer, Christ enables him to

overcome self daily and obey Him perfectly. Liberation from sin is an accomplished fact; denial of self is to be a daily experience.

If a believer could understand the full implication of the cross at the time he is born anew he would be freed wholly from sin on the one side and on the other be in possession of a new life. It is indeed regrettable that many workers fail to present this full salvation to sinners, so that the latter believe just half God's salvation. This leaves them as it were only half-saved: their sins are forgiven, but they lack the strength to cease from sin. Moreover, even on those occasions when salvation is presented completely sinners desire just to have their sins forgiven for they do not sincerely expect deliverance from the power of sin. This equally renders them half saved.

Should a person believe and receive full salvation at the very outset, he will experience less failure battling with sin and more success battling with self. Rarely are such believers found. Most enter upon only half their salvation. Their conflicts are therefore mainly with sin. And some do not even know what self is. In this connection, the personal condition of the believer plays a part before regeneration. Many tend to do good even before they believe. They of course do not possess the power to do good nor could they be good. But their conscience seems to be comparatively enlightened, though their strength to do good is nevertheless weak. They experience what is commonly called the conflict between reason and lust. Now when these hear of God's total salvation they eagerly accept grace for release from sin even as they receive grace for forgiveness of sin. Others, however, before believing, harbour pitch-black consciences, sin terribly, and never intend to do good. Upon hearing of God's whole salvation they naturally grasp the grace of forgiveness and neglect (not reject) the grace for deliverance from sin. They will encounter much struggle over sin of the flesh afterwards.

Why is this latter case so? Because such a reborn man possesses a new life which demands him to overcome the rule of his flesh and to obey it instead. God's life is absolute; it must gain complete mastery over the man. As soon as that life enters the human spirit it requires the man to leave his former master of sin and to be subject entirely to the Holy Spirit. Even so, sin in this particular man is deeply rooted. Although his will is being renewed in part through the regenerated life, it is still tied to sin and self; on many occasions it bends towards sin. Inevitably great conflict will erupt between the new life and the flesh. Since people in this condition are numerous, we shall pay special attention to them. Let me remind my reader, however, that this experience of prolonged struggle and failure with sin (different from that with self) is unnecessary.

The flesh demands full sovereignty; so does the spiritual life. The flesh desires to have man forever attached to itself; while the spiritual life wants to have man completely subject to the Holy Spirit. At all points the flesh and spiritual life differ. The nature of the former is that of the first Adam, the nature of the latter belongs to the last Adam. The motive of the first is earthly; that of the second, heavenly. The flesh focuses all things upon self; spiritual life centres all upon Christ. The flesh wishes to lead man to sin, but spiritual life longs to lead him to righteousness. Since these two are so essentially contrary, how can a person avoid clashing continually with the flesh? Not realising the full salvation of Christ, a believer constantly experiences such a struggle.

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When young believers fall into such conflict they are dumbfounded. Some despair of spiritual growth thinking they are just too bad. Others begin to doubt they are genuinely regenerated, not aware that regeneration itself brings in this contention. Formerly, when the flesh was in authority without interference (for the spirit was dead), they could sin terribly without feeling any sense of sinfulness. Now new life has sprung up, and with it heavenly nature, desire, light and thought. As this new light penetrates the man it immediately exposes the defilement and corruption within. The new desire is naturally dissatisfied to remain in such a state and longs to follow the will of God. The flesh begins to contend with the spiritual life. Such battle gives the believer an impression that housed within him are two persons. Each has its own idea and strength. Each seeks victory. When the spiritual life is in ascendancy the believer is most glad; when the flesh gains the upper hand he can not but grieve. Experience of this kind confirms that such ones have been regenerated.

The purpose of God is never to reform the flesh but to destroy it. It is by God's life given the believer at regeneration that the self in the flesh is to be destroyed. The life God imparts to man is indeed most powerful, but the regenerated person is still a babe - newly born and very weak. The flesh long has held the reins and its power is tremendous. Furthermore, the regenerated one has not yet learned to apprehend by faith God's complete salvation. Though he be saved, he is still of the flesh during this period. Being fleshly denotes being governed by the flesh. What is most pitiful is for a believer, hitherto enlightened by heavenly light to know the wickedness of the flesh and to desire with full heart victory over it, to find himself too weak to overcome. This is the moment when he sheds many tears of sorrow. How can he not be angry with himself, for though he harbours a new desire to destroy sin and to please God his will is not steadfast enough to subdue the body of sin. Few are the victories; many, the defeats.

Paul in Romans 7 voices the inner anguish of this conflict:

"I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate ... For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I can not do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members." (Romans 7:15-23)

Many will respond to his cry of nearly final despair, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24)

What is the meaning of this contention? It is one of the ways the Holy Spirit disciplines us. God has provided a whole salvation for man. He who does not know he has it will not be able to enjoy it, neither will he be able to experience it if he does not desire after it. God can only give to those who believe and receive and claim. When man hence asks for forgiveness and regeneration, God surely bestows it upon him. And it is through conflict that God induces the believer to seek and to grasp total triumph in

Christ. He who was ignorant before will now seek to know; the Holy Spirit will then be afforded a chance to reveal to him how Christ has dealt with his old man on the cross so that he may now believe into possessing such triumph. And he who possessed not because he sought not will discover through such battle that all the truth he had was merely mental and consequently ineffectual. This will stir him to desire to experience the truth he only mentally had known.

This strife increases as the, days go by. If believers will proceed faithfully without giving in to despair, they will incur fiercer conflict until such time as they are delivered.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FLESHLY OR CARNAL BELIEVER

All believers could, like Paul, be filled with the Holy Spirit at the moment of belief and baptism (cf. Acts 9:17-18). Unfortunately many still are controlled by the flesh as though not dead and raised up again. These have not truly believed in the accomplished fact of Christ's death and resurrection for them, nor have they sincerely acted upon the call of the Holy Spirit to follow the principle of death and resurrection. According to the finished work of Christ they have died and have been resurrected already; according to their responsibility as believers they should die to self and live to God; but in actual practice they do not do so. These believers may be considered abnormal. This abnormality is not to be understood as being limited only to our day, however. Long, long ago just such a condition among believers had confronted the Apostle Paul. The Christians at Corinth were one example. Listen to what he said of them:

“But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men?” (1 Corinthians 3:1-3)

Here the Apostle divides all Christians into two classes: the spiritual and the fleshly or carnal. The spiritual Christians are not at all extraordinary; they are simply normal. It is the fleshly who are out of the ordinary, because they are abnormal. Those at Corinth were indeed Christians, but they were fleshly, not spiritual. Three times in this chapter Paul declares they were men of the flesh. Through the wisdom given him by the Holy Spirit the Apostle was made to realise that he first must identify them before he could offer them the message they needed.

Biblical regeneration is a birth by which the innermost part of man's being, the deeply hidden spirit, is renewed and indwelt by the Spirit of God. It requires time for the power of this new life to reach the outside: that is, to be extended from the centre to the circumference. Hence we can not expect to find the strength of “the young men” nor the experience of “the fathers” manifested in the life of a child in Christ. Although a newly born believer may proceed faithfully, loving the Lord best and distinguishing himself in zeal, he still needs time for opportunities to know more of the wickedness of sin and self and occasions to know more of the will of God and the way of the spirit. However much he may love the Lord or love the truth, this new believer still walks in the realm of feelings and thoughts, not yet having been tested and refined by fire. A newly born Christian can not help being fleshly. Though filled with the Holy Spirit, he nevertheless does not know the flesh. How can one be liberated from the works of the flesh if he does not recognise that such works spring from the flesh? In assessing their actual condition, therefore, newly born babes are generally of the flesh.

The Bible does not expect new Christians to be spiritual instantaneously; if they should remain as babes after many years, however, then their situation is indeed most pitiful. Paul himself points out to the Corinthians that he had treated them as men of the flesh earlier because they were new born babes in Christ, and, that by now - at the moment

of his writing them - they certainly should be growing into manhood They had instead frittered away their lives, remained as babes, and were thus still fleshly.

It does not necessitate as much time as we think today for one to be transformed from the fleshly into the spiritual. The believers at Corinth came out from a strictly sinful heathen background. After the lapse of only a few years the Apostle already viewed them as having been babes too long. They had been too long in the flesh, for by that time they ought to be spiritual. The purpose of Christ's redemption is to remove all hindrances to the Holy Spirit's control over the whole person so that he can be made spiritual. This redemption can never fail because the power of the Holy Spirit is superabundant. As a fleshly sinner can become a regenerated believer so a regenerated yet fleshly believer can be changed into a spiritual man. How lamentable to find modern day Christians achieving no progress in their spiritual walk after several years, nay, even after decades. These moreover are filled with amazement if they find some who do enter upon a life of the spirit after a number of years. They consider it most unusual, not aware it is but normal - the regular growth of life. How long have you believed in the Lord? Are you spiritual yet? We should not become aged babes, grieving the Holy Spirit and suffering loss ourselves. All regenerated ones should covet spiritual development, permitting the Holy Spirit to rule in every respect so that in a relatively short period He may be able to lead us into what God has provided for us. We should not waste time, making no progress.

What then are the reasons for not growing? Perhaps there are two. On the one hand, it may be due to the negligence of those who, watching over the souls of the younger believers, may only speak to them of the grace of God and of their position in Christ but neglect to encourage them to seek spiritual experience. (Nay, those who watch over others may themselves be ignorant of life in the Spirit. How then could such ones ever lead others into more abundant life?) On the other hand, it may be because the believers themselves are not keen on spiritual affairs. Either they assume that it is sufficient enough merely to be saved or they have no spiritual appetite or they simply are unwilling to pay the price for advancement. As a deplorable consequence the church is overstuffed with big babes.

What are the characteristics of the fleshly? Foremost among them is remaining long as babes. The duration of babyhood should not exceed a few years. When one is born anew by believing that the Son of God atoned for his sins on the cross, he simultaneously ought to believe that he has been crucified with Christ in order that the Holy Spirit may release him from the power of the flesh. Ignorance of this naturally will keep him in the flesh for many years.

The second characteristic of the fleshly is that they are unfit to absorb spiritual teaching. "I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready." The Corinthians grossly prided themselves on their knowledge and wisdom. Of all the churches in that period, that at Corinth was probably the most informed one. Paul early in his letter thanked God for their rich knowledge (1 Corinthians 1:5). Should Paul deliver spiritual sermons to them they could understand every word; however, all their understandings were in the mind. Although they knew everything, these Corinthians did not have the power to express in life that which they knew. Most likely there are many fleshly believers today who grasp so much so well that they can even preach to

others but who are themselves yet unspiritual. Genuine spiritual knowledge lies not in wonderful and mysterious thoughts but in actual spiritual experience through union of the believer's life with truth. Cleverness is useless here, while eagerness for truth is insufficient too; the sine qua non is a path of perfect obedience to the Holy Spirit Who alone truly teaches us. All else is merely the transmission of knowledge from one mind to another. Such data will not render a fleshly person spiritual; on the contrary, his carnal walk actually will turn all his "spiritual" knowledge into that which is fleshly. What he needs is not increased spiritual teaching but an obedient heart which is willing to yield his life to the Holy Spirit and go the way of the cross according to the Spirit's command. Increased spiritual teaching will only strengthen his carnality and serve to deceive him into conceiving himself as spiritual.

For does he not say to himself, "How else could I possibly know so many spiritual things unless I were spiritual?" Whereas the real touchstone should be, "How much do you truly know from life or is it merely a product of the mind?" May God be gracious to us.

Paul wrote of yet another evidence of being fleshly when he affirmed that "while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men?" The sin of jealousy and strife is eminent proof of carnality. Dissensions were rife in the church at Corinth, as is confirmed by such declarations as "I belong to Paul," "I belong to Apollos," "I belong to Cephas," "I belong to Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:12). Even those who were contending for Christ by saying "I am of Christ" were included among the fleshly, for the spirit of flesh is always and everywhere jealous and contentious. For these to hold themselves up as being of Christ, but in that attitude of spirit, is inescapably carnal. However sweet the word may sound, any sectarian boasting is but the babbling of a babe. The divisions in the church are due to no other cause than to lack of love and walking after the flesh. Such an individual, supposedly contending for the truth, is simply camouflaging the real person. The sinners of the world are men of the flesh; as such, they are not regenerated; they are therefore under the rule of their soul and body. For a believer to be fleshly signifies that he too is behaving like an ordinary man. Now it is perfectly natural for worldly people to be fleshly; it is understandable if even newly born believers are fleshly; but if, according to the years during which you have believed in the Lord you ought to be spiritual, then how can you continue to behave as an ordinary man?

It is evident that a person belongs to the flesh if he comports himself like an ordinary man and sins often. No matter how much spiritual teaching he knows or how many spiritual experiences he purports to have had or how much effective service he has rendered: none of these makes him less carnal if he remains undelivered from his peculiar temperament, his temper, his selfishness, his contention, his vainglory, his unforgiving or unloving spirit.

To be fleshly or carnal means to behave "like ordinary men." We should ask ourselves whether or not our conduct differs very radically from ordinary men. If many worldly manners cling to your life then you are doubtless still of the flesh. Let us not argue over our being labelled as either spiritual or carnal. If we are not governed by the Holy Spirit what profit will the mere designation of spiritual be to us? This is after all a matter of life, not of title.

THE SINS OF THE FLESH

What the Apostle was experiencing in Romans 7 was a war against the sin which abides in the body. “Sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me ... It was sin working death in me ... sold under sin ... but sin which dwells within me” (Romans 7:11, 13-14, 17, 20). While still in the flesh a believer often is overcome by the sin within him. Many are the battles and many, the sins committed.

The necessities of the human body may be classified into three categories: nourishment, reproduction, defense. Before man's fall these were legitimate requirements, unmixed with sin. Only after man fell into sin did these three become media for sin. In the case of nourishment, the world uses food to entice us. The first temptation of man is in this matter of food. As the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil enticed Eve, so drinking and feasting have become a sin of the flesh today. Let us not lightly regard this issue of food, for many fleshly Christians have stumbled on this point. The carnal believers at Corinth stumbled their brethren on just this matter of food. All who were therefore to be elders and deacons in those days were required to have overcome on this point (1 Timothy 3:3, 8). Only, the spiritual person appreciates the unprofitableness of devoting himself to eating and drinking. “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Second, reproduction. Following the fall of man reproduction was changed into human lust. The Bible especially connects lust with the flesh. Even in the Edenic garden the sin of covetous eating immediately aroused lusts and shame. Paul puts these two together in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 6:13, 15), and definitely relates drunkenness to unrighteousness (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Now as to defense. When sin has secured control, the body exhibits its strength in self-defense. It opposes anything which may interfere with its comfort and pleasure. What is commonly called temper and such of its fruits as anger and strife issue from the flesh and are therefore sins of the flesh. Because sin is the motivation behind self-defense, there has flowed forth directly and indirectly from it numerous transgressions. How many of the darkest sins in this world spring from self-interest, self-existence, self-glory, self-opinion, and whatsoever else there is of self.

An analysis of all the world's sins will demonstrate how they each relate to these three categories. A carnal Christian is one who is dominated by one, two, or all three of these items. While it amazes no one for a worldly man to be ruled by the sin of his body, it ought to be viewed as very abnormal should a born again Christian remain long in the flesh, fail to subdue the power of sin and live a life of ups and downs. A believer ought to allow the Holy Spirit to examine his heart and enlighten him as to what is prohibited by the law of the Holy Spirit and the law of nature, as to what hinders him from gaining temperance and self-control, and as to what rules him and deprives him of liberty in his spirit to serve God freely. Unless these sins are taken away, he can not enter richly into spiritual life.

THE THINGS OF THE FLESH

The flesh has many outlets. We have learned how it is hostile to God and can not possibly please Him. Neither believer nor sinner however, can genuinely appreciate the

complete worthlessness, wickedness, and defilement of the flesh as viewed by God unless he is shown by the Holy Spirit. Only when God by His Spirit has revealed to man the true condition of the flesh as God sees it will man then deal with his flesh.

The manifestations of the flesh manward are well known. If a person is strict with himself and refuses to follow, as he once did, “the desires of body and mind” (Ephesians 2:3), he will detect easily how defiled are these manifestations. The Galatian letter of Paul gives a list of these sins of the flesh so that none can be mistaken - “Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit (literally, “sect”), envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like” (Galatians 5:19-21). In this enumeration the Apostle declares that “the works of the flesh are plain.” Whoever is willing to understand certainly shall recognise them. To ascertain whether one is of the flesh, he need but inquire of himself if he is doing any of these works of the flesh. It is of course unnecessary for him to commit all in the list in order to be carnal. Were he to do merely one of them he would establish himself beyond doubt as being fleshly, for how could he do any one of them if the flesh had relinquished its rule already? The presence of a work of the flesh proves the existence of the flesh.

These works of the flesh may be divided into five groups: (1) sins which defile the body, such as immorality, impurity, licentiousness; (2) sinful supernatural communications with satanic forces, such as idolatry, sorcery; (3) sinful temper and its peculiarities, such as enmity, strife, jealousy, anger; (4) religious sects and parties, such as selfishness, dissensions, party spirit, envy; and (5) lasciviousness, such as drunkenness and carousing. Every one of these is easily observed. Those who do them are of the flesh.

In these five groups we distinguish some sins as less sinful and others as more defiling; but however we may view them, whether more ugly or more refined, God discloses that all of them derive from one source - the flesh. Those who often commit the most defiling sins naturally know themselves as of the flesh, yet how difficult for those who triumph over these comparatively more defiling sins to acknowledge that they are carnal. They usually consider themselves superior to others and as not walking according to the flesh. They do not realise that however civilised the appearance may be, the flesh is still the flesh. “Strife, dissensions, party spirit, envy” convey a much cleaner appearance than that of “immorality, impurity, licentiousness, carousing.” All nonetheless are fruits from the same tree. May we pray over these three verses until our eyes are opened to see ourselves. May we be humbled through prayer. Let us pray until we cry with many tears and mourn for our sins, until we know that we are only in name Christians - even “spiritual” Christians, but that our actual walk continues to be replete with the works of the flesh. May we pray until our hearts are aflame, willing to remove every carnal element.

The first step in the work of the Holy Spirit is to convince and convict us of our sins. As without the illumination of the Holy Spirit a sinner initially will never see the sinfulness of his sin and flee from the coming wrath into the obedience of Christ, so a believer subsequently needs to see his sin a second time. A Christian ought to blame himself for his sin. How can he ever become spiritual if he does not discern the utter wickedness and despicability of his flesh, so that he even abhors himself! Oh, in

whatever way it may be that we sin, our belonging to the flesh remains the same. Now is the hour we should humbly prostrate ourselves before God, willing to be convicted afresh of our sins by the Holy Spirit.

THE NECESSITY FOR DEATH

To the degree that a believer is enlightened by the Holy Spirit into apprehending something of the pitiful condition of being fleshly, to that extent will his struggle with the flesh be intensified; and more often will be manifested his failures. In defeat he will be shown more of the sin and frailty of his flesh in order that he may be aroused to an increased indignation at himself and an ardent determination to contend with the sin of his flesh. Such a chain reaction may extend protractedly until at last, through experiencing the deeper work of the cross, he is delivered. That the Holy Spirit should lead us in just this way is truly fraught with meaning. Before the cross can do its deeper work there must be an adequate preparation. Struggle and failure supply just that.

Apropos the believer's experience, although he may agree mentally with God's estimate of the flesh that it is corrupted to the core and irredeemable, he nevertheless may lack that clear spiritual insight which accurately appreciates the defilement and corruptness of the flesh. He may suppose what God says to be true. But though the believer still would never say so, he still tries to tinker with his flesh.

Many believers, ignorant of the salvation of God, attempt to conquer the flesh by battling it. They hold that victory depends upon the measure of power they have. These therefore earnestly anticipate God will grant them increased spiritual power to enable them to subdue their flesh. This battle normally extends over a long period, marked by more defeats than victories, until finally it seems complete victory over the flesh is unrealisable.

During this time the believer continues on the one hand to wage war and on the other to try improving or disciplining his flesh. He prays, he searches the Bible, he sets up many rules ("do not handle, do not taste, do not touch") in the vain hope of subduing and taming the flesh. He unwittingly tumbles into the trap of treating the evil of the flesh as due to the lack of rules, education and civilization. If only he could give his flesh some spiritual training, thinks he, he will be freed from its trouble. He does not comprehend that such treatment is useless (Colossians 2:21-23).

Because of the Christian's confusion in apparently desiring the destruction of the flesh while concurrently trying to refine it, the Holy Spirit must allow him to strive, to be defeated, and then to stiffer under self-accusation. Only after he has had this experience over and over again will the believer realise that the flesh is irredeemable and his method futile. He then will search out another kind of salvation. Thus he now has come to appreciate in his experience what before he merely came to know in his mind.

If a child of God faithfully and honestly believes in God and sincerely entreats the Holy Spirit to reveal God's holiness to him so that he may know his flesh in that light, the Spirit certainly will do so. Henceforth he may perhaps be spared many sufferings. But such believers are few. Most trust in their own method, assuming that they are not that

bad after all. In order to correct this incorrect assumption, the Holy Spirit patiently leads believers into experiencing little by little the futility of their own devices.

We have observed that we can not yield to the flesh; nor can we repair, regulate, or educate it, because none of our methods can ever alter in the slightest the nature of the flesh. What then can be done? The flesh must die. This is God's way. Not through any other avenue but death is it to be. We would prefer to tame the flesh by striving, by changing it, by exercising the will, or by innumerable other means; but God's prescription is death. If the flesh is dead, are not all problems automatically solved? The flesh is not to be conquered; it is to die. This is most reasonable when considered in relation to how we became flesh in the first place: "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." We became flesh by being born of it. Now the exit simply follows the entrance. The way of possessing is the way of losing. Since we became flesh by being born of the flesh, it naturally follows that we shall be freed from it if the flesh dies. Crucifixion, is the one and only way. "For he who has died is freed from sin" (Romans 6:7). Anything less than death is insufficient. Death is the only salvation.

The flesh is most defiled (2 Peter 2:10-22); God accordingly does not attempt to change it. There is no method of deliverance other than to put it to death. Even the precious blood of the Lord Jesus can not cleanse the flesh. We find in the Bible how His blood washes our sin but never washes our flesh. It must be crucified (Galatians 5:24). The Holy Spirit can not reform the flesh; therefore He will not dwell in the midst of sinful flesh. His abiding in the believer is not for the purpose of improving, but for warring against, the flesh (Galatians 5:17). "It (the holy anointing oil which is a type of the Holy Spirit) shall not be poured upon the bodies of ordinary men" (Exodus 30:32). If such be the case, how absurd for us frequently to pray that the Lord will make us good and loving so that we may serve Him! How vain is that hope which aims at a holy position some day wherein we may be daily with the Lord and are able to glorify Him in all things! Indeed, we should never attempt to repair the flesh in order to make it cooperate with the Spirit of God. The flesh is ordained to death. Only by consigning the flesh to the cross may we be liberated from being enslaved permanently by it.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CROSS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Many, if not most, believers were not filled with the Holy Spirit at the moment they believed the Lord. What is even worse, after many years of believing they continue to be entangled by sin and remain carnal Christians. In these pages which follow, what we intend to explain regarding how a Christian may be set free from his flesh is based upon the experience of the believers at Corinth as well as that of many like believers everywhere. We moreover do not wish to imply that a Christian must first believe in the substitutionary work of the cross before he can believe in its identifying work. Is it not true, however, that many do not have a distinct revelation concerning the cross at the beginning? What they have received is but half the whole truth; and so they are compelled to receive the other half at a subsequent period. Now if the reader already has accepted the complete work of the cross, what is given here will concern him little. But if like the majority of believers be, too has believed only half the whole then the remainder is indispensable for him. Yet we do want our readers to know that the two sides of the work of the cross need not be accepted separately; a second believing only becomes necessary because of incompleteness at the first.

THE DELIVERANCE OF THE CROSS

Upon reciting many deeds of the flesh in his Galatian letter, the Apostle Paul then points out that “those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24). Here is deliverance. Is it not strange that what concerns the believer vastly differs from what concerns God? The former is concerned with “the works of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19), that is, with the varying sins of the flesh. He is occupied with today’s anger, tomorrow’s jealousy, or the day after tomorrow’s strife. The believer mourns over a particular sin and longs for victory over it. Yet all these sins are but fruits from the same tree. While plucking one fruit (actually one can not pick off any), out crops another. One after another they grow, giving him no chance for victory. On the other hand God is concerned not with the *works* of the flesh but with “the flesh” itself (Galatians 5:24). Had the tree been put to death, would there be any need to fear lest it bear fruit? The believer busily makes plans to handle sins - which are the fruits, while forgetting to deal with the flesh itself - which is the root. No wonder that before he can clear up one sin, another has burst forth. We must therefore deal today with the source of sin.

Babes in Christ need to appropriate the deeper meaning of the cross, for they are still carnal. The aim of God is to crucify the believer’s old man with Christ with the result that they who belong to Christ “have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” Bear in mind that it is the flesh together with its powerful passions and desires that has been crucified. As the sinner was regenerated and redeemed from his sins through the cross, so now the carnal babe in Christ must be delivered from the rule of the flesh by the same cross so that he can walk according to the Spirit and no longer according to the flesh. Thereafter it will not be long before he becomes a spiritual Christian.

Here we find the contrast between the fall of man and the operation of the cross. The salvation provided by the latter is just the remedy for the former. How fitting indeed they are to each other. Firstly, Christ died on the cross for the sinner to remit his sin. A

holy God could now righteously forgive him. But secondly, the sinner as well died on the cross with Christ so that he might not be controlled any longer by his flesh.

Only this can enable man's spirit to regain its proper rule, make the body its outward servant and the soul its intermediary. In this way the spirit, the soul, and the body are restored to their original position before the fall. If we are ignorant of the meaning of the death herein described we shall not be delivered. May the Holy Spirit be our Revealer.

"Those who belong to Christ Jesus" refers to every believer in the Lord. All who have believed Him and are born anew belong to Him. The deciding factor is whether one has been related to Christ in life, not how spiritual one is or what work he does for the Lord nor whether he has been freed from sin, has overcome the passions and desires of his flesh, and is now wholly sanctified. In other words, the question can only be: has one been regenerated or not? Has one believed in the Lord Jesus as his Saviour or not? If he has, no matter what his current spiritual state may be - in victory or in defeat - he "has crucified the flesh."

The issue before us is not a moral one, nor is it a matter of spiritual life, knowledge, or work. It simply is whether he is the Lord's. If so, then he already has crucified the flesh on the cross. The meaning clearly is not that of going to crucify, or of in the process of crucifying, but has *crucified*.

It may be helpful to be more explicit here. We have indicated that the crucifixion of the flesh is not dependent upon experiences, however different they may be; rather is it contingent upon the fact of God's finished work. "Those who belong to Christ Jesus" - the weak as well as the strong - "have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." You say you still sin, but God says you have been crucified on the cross. You say your temper persists, but God's answer is that you have been crucified. You say your lusts remain very potent, but again God replies that your flesh has been crucified on the cross. For the moment will you please not look at your experience, but just hearken to what God says to you. If you do not listen to His Word and instead look daily upon your situation, you will never enter into the reality of your flesh having been crucified on the cross. Disregard your feelings and experience. God pronounces your flesh crucified; it therefore *has* been crucified. Simply respond to God's Word and you shall have experience. When God tells you that "your flesh has been crucified" you should answer with "Amen, indeed my flesh has been crucified." In thus acting upon His Word you shall see your flesh is dead indeed.

The believers at Corinth had indulged in sins of fornication, jealousies, contentions, party spirit, lawsuits and many others. They were plainly carnal. True, they were "babes in Christ"; nevertheless they were of Christ. Can it actually be said that these carnal believers had had their flesh crucified on the cross? The answer undeniably is yes; even *these* had had their flesh crucified. How is this so? We should realise that the Bible never tells us to have ourselves crucified; it informs us only that we "were crucified." We should understand that we are not to be crucified individually but that we have been crucified together with Christ (Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:6). If it is a crucifixion together then the occasion when the Lord Jesus was Himself crucified is that moment when our flesh too was crucified. Furthermore, the co-crucifixion is not inflicted on us personally since it was the Lord Jesus who took us to the cross at His

crucifixion. Wherefore God considers our flesh as crucified already. To Him it is an accomplished fact. Whatever may be our personal experiences God declares that “those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh.” In order to possess such death we must not give too large a place to discovering how or to noticing our experience; we should instead believe God’s Word. “God says my flesh has been crucified so I believe it is crucified. I acknowledge that what God says is true.” By responding in this fashion we shall soon encounter the reality of it. If we look at God’s fact first our experience will follow next.

From God’s perspective these Corinthians did have their flesh crucified on the cross with the Lord Jesus; but from their point of view they certainly did not have such an experience personally. Perhaps this was due to their not knowing God’s fact. Hence the first step towards deliverance is to treat the flesh according to God’s viewpoint. And what is that? It is not in trying to crucify the flesh but in acknowledging that it has been crucified, not in walking according to our sight but according to our faith in the Word of God. If we are well established on this point of acknowledging the flesh as already crucified, then we shall be able to proceed in dealing with the flesh experimentally. If we waver over this fact, the possibility of our definitely possessing it will escape us. In order to experience co-crucifixion we first must set aside our current situation and simply trust the Word of God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND EXPERIENCE

“While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions ... were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are dead” (Romans 7:5-6). Because of this the flesh has no rule over us any further.

We have believed and acknowledged that our flesh has been crucified on the cross. Now, not before, we can turn our attention to the matter of experience. Though we presently stress experience, we nevertheless firmly hold to the fact of our crucifixion with Christ. What God has done for us and what we experience of God’s completed work, though distinguishable, are inseparable.

God has done what He could do. The question next is, what attitude do we assume towards His finished work? Not just in name but in actuality has He crucified our flesh on the cross. If we believe and if we exercise our will to choose what God has accomplished for us, it will become our life experience. We are not asked to do anything because God has done it all. We are not required to crucify our flesh for God has crucified it on the cross. Do you believe this is true? Do you desire to possess it in your life? If we believe and if we desire then we shall co-operate with the Holy Spirit in obtaining rich experience. Colossians 3:5 implores us to “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you.” This is the path towards experience. The “therefore” indicates the consequence of what precedes it in verse 3; namely, “You have died.” The “You. have died” is what God has achieved for you us. Because “you have died,” therefore “put to death what is earthly in you.” The first mention of death here is our factual position in Christ; the second, our actual experience. The failure of believers today can be traced to a failure to see the relationship between these two deaths. Some have attempted to put their flesh to nought for they lay stress only upon the death experience. Their flesh consequently grows livelier with each dealing! Others have acknowledged the truth that their flesh in fact was crucified with Christ on the cross; yet they do not seek the

practical reality of it. Neither of these can ever appropriate experimentally the crucifixion of the flesh.

If we desire to put our members to death we first must have a ground for such action; otherwise we merely rely upon our strength. No degree of zeal can ever bring the desired experience to us. Moreover, if we only know our flesh has been crucified with Christ but are not exercised to have His accomplished work carried out in us, our knowledge too will be unavailing. A putting to nought requires a knowing first of an identification in His death; knowing our identification, we must exercise the putting to death. These two must go together. We are deceiving ourselves should we be satisfied with just perceiving the fact of identification, thinking we are now spiritual because the flesh has been destroyed; on the other hand, it is an equal deception if in putting to nought the wicked deeds of the flesh we over-emphasise *them* and fail to take a death attitude towards the flesh. Should we forget that the flesh is dead we shall never be able to lay anything to rest. The “put to death” is contingent upon the “you have died.” This putting to death means bringing the death of the Lord Jesus to bear upon all the deeds of the flesh. The crucifixion of the Lord is a most authoritative one for it puts away everything it encounters. Since we are united with Him in His crucifixion we can apply His death to any member which is tempted to lust and immediately put it to nought.

Our union with Christ in His death signifies that it is an accomplished fact in our spirits. What a believer must do now is to bring this sure death out of his spirit and apply it to his members each time his wicked lusts may be aroused. Such spiritual death is not a once for all proposition. Whenever the believer is not watchful or loses his faith, the flesh will certainly go on a rampage. If he desires to be conformed completely to the Lord’s death, he must unceasingly put to nought the deeds of his members so that what is real in the spirit may be executed in the body.

But whence comes the power to so apply the crucifixion of the Lord to our members? It is “by the Spirit,” insists Paul, that “you put to death the deeds of the body” (Romans 8:13). To put away these deeds the believer must rely upon the Holy Spirit to translate his co-crucifixion with Christ into personal experience. He must believe that the Holy Spirit will administer the death of the cross on whatever needs to die. In view of the fact that the believer’s flesh was crucified with Christ on the cross, he does not need today to be crucified once again. All which is required is to apply, by the Holy Spirit, the accomplished death of the Lord Jesus for him on the cross to any particular wicked deed of the body which now tries to rise up. It will then be put aside by the power of the Lord’s death. The wicked works of the flesh may spring up at any time and at any place; accordingly, unless the child of God by the Holy Spirit continually turns to account that power of the holy death of our Lord Jesus, he will not be able to triumph. But if in this way he lays the deeds of the body to rest, the Holy Spirit Who indwells him will ultimately realise God’s purpose of putting the body of sin out of a job (Romans 6:6). By thus appropriating the cross the babe in Christ will be liberated from the power of the flesh and will be united with the Lord Jesus in resurrection life.

Henceforth the Christian should “walk by the Spirit” and should “not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). We always should remember that however deeply our Lord’s cross may penetrate into our lives we can not expect to avoid further agitations

of the wicked deeds of our members without constant vigilance. Whenever one of God's own fails to follow the Holy Spirit he immediately reverts to following the flesh. God unveils to us the reality of our flesh through His Apostle Paul's delineation of the Christian's self in Romans 7 from verse 5 onward. The moment the Christian ceases to heed the Holy Spirit he instantly fits into the carnal life pattern described here. Some assume that because Romans 7 stands between Chapters 6 and 8 the activity of the flesh will become past history as soon as the believer has passed through it and entered into the life of the Spirit in Romans 8. In actuality Chapters 7 and 8 run concurrently. Whenever a believer does not walk by the Spirit as in Romans 8 he is immediately engulfed in the experience of Romans 7. "So then I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin" (Romans 7:25). You will notice that Paul concludes his description of his experience given before this verse 25 by using the phrase "so then." He encounters incessant defeat up through verse 24; only in verse 25 does he enter into victory: "Thanks be unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:25a). Upon gaining victory over constant defeat we read Paul saying: "I of myself serve the law of God with my mind." Here he is telling us that his new life desires what God desires. That, however, is not the whole story; for Paul immediately continues by declaring: "*but* with my flesh I serve the law of sin." And this we find him saying *just after* his victory of verse 25a. The obvious inference is that no matter how much his inner mind may serve God's law, his flesh always serves sin's law. However much he may be delivered from the flesh it remains unchanged and continues to serve sin's law (Romans 7:25), because the flesh is forever the flesh. Our life in the Holy Spirit may be deepened, but this will not alter the nature of the flesh or prevent it from serving the law of sin. If we therefore desire to be led of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14) and freed from the oppression of the flesh, we must put to death the wicked deeds of the body and walk according to the Holy Spirit.

THE EXISTENCE OF THE FLESH

Let us note carefully that though the flesh may be so put to death that it becomes "ineffective" (the real meaning of "destroy" in Romans 6:6), it endures nonetheless. It is a great error to consider the flesh eradicated from *us* and to conclude that the nature of sin is completely annihilated. Such false teaching leads people astray. Regenerated life does not alter the flesh; co-crucifixion does not extinguish the flesh; the indwelling Holy Spirit does not render it impossible to walk by the flesh. The flesh with its fleshly nature abides perpetually in the believer. Whenever opportunity is provided for its operation, it at once will spring into action.

We have previously seen how closely associated are the human body and the flesh. Until such time as we are freed physically from this body we shall not be able to be so delivered from the flesh that no more possibility of its activity exists. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh. There is absolutely no eradication of it until this body corrupted from Adam is transformed. Our body is not yet redeemed (Romans 8:23); it waits for redemption at the return of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:22-23, 42-44, 51-56; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; Philippians 3:20-21). As long as we are in the body, therefore, we must be alert daily lest the flesh break forth with its wicked deeds.

Our life on earth can at best be likened to that of Paul, who remarked that "though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh" (2 Corinthians 10:3 ASV).

Since he still possesses a body he walks in the flesh. Yet because the nature of the flesh is so corrupt he does not war according to the flesh. He walks in the flesh, yes; but he does not walk by the flesh (Romans 8:4). Until a believer is set free from the physical body he is not entirely free from the flesh. Physically speaking he must live in the flesh (Galatians 2:20); spiritually speaking he need not and must not war according to the flesh. Now if by obvious inference from 2 Corinthians 10:3, Paul, being in the body, remains susceptible to warring according to the flesh (though from verse 4 we see he does not war that way), who then dares to say that he no longer has any potentially active flesh. The finished work of the cross and its continual application by the Holy Spirit are consequently inseparable.

We must pay unusual attention to this point for it brings in grave consequences. Should a believer come to assume that he is sanctified completely and has no more flesh, he will slip either into a life of pretension or into a life of indolence void of watchfulness. One fact needs to be underscored here. Children born of regenerated and sanctified parents are still of the flesh and in need of being born anew just as any other children are. None can say they are not of the flesh and have no need to be born anew. The Lord Jesus asserted that “that which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6). If what is born is flesh, it proves that what gives birth to it must likewise be flesh for only flesh can beget flesh. That children are fleshly bears concrete testimony that the parents are not delivered completely from the flesh. The saints transmit to their children their fallen nature only because it is theirs originally. They can not impart the divine nature received at regeneration because that nature is not originally theirs but is received individually as a free gift from God. The fact that believers do communicate their sinful nature to their children indicates it is ever present in them.

Viewed from this approach, a new creature in Christ we realise never fully recovers in this life the position Adam had before the fall, for the body at least is still awaiting redemption (Romans 8:23). A person who is a new creation continues to harbour the sinful nature within him; he is yet in the flesh. His feelings and desires are at times imperfect and they are less noble than those of Adam before the fall. Unless the human flesh is eradicated from within, he can not have perfect feelings, desires or love. Man can never arrive at the position of being beyond the possibility of sin since the flesh persists. If a believer does not follow the Holy Spirit but instead yields to the flesh, he certainly will be under the reins of the flesh. Despite these realities, however, we should not emasculate the salvation fulfilled by Christ. The Bible informs us in many places that whatsoever has been begotten of God and is filled with God has no tendency towards sin. This though does not mean there is categorically no possibility of sinful desire. To illustrate. We say wood floats - that it does not have the tendency to sink; but surely it is not unsinkable. If the wood is soaked sufficiently enough in water it will sink of its own accord. Nevertheless the nature of a piece of wood clearly is not to sink. Similarly, God has saved us to the extent of not having the tendency to sin, but He has not saved us to the extent of our being unable to sin. Should a believer remain wholly bent toward sin, it proves he is of the flesh and has not yet appropriated full salvation. The Lord Jesus is able to bend us away from sin; but in addition we must be watchful. Under the influence of the world and the temptation of Satan the possibility of sinning stays with us. Naturally a believer should understand that in Christ he is a new creation. As such, the Holy Spirit indwells his spirit; and this, together with the death of Jesus actively working in his body, can equip the believer to

live a holy life. Such a walk is only possible because the Holy Spirit administers the cross upon the believer's flesh in putting to death the deeds of its members. It is then no longer active. This is not to imply, however, that he has no more flesh. For a believer continues to possess a sinful flesh and is conscious of its presence and defilement. The very fact that sinful nature is transmitted to the children has established beyond doubt that what we now possess is not the natural perfection of sinless Adam.

A believer must confess that even in his holiest hours there may be moments of weakness: evil thoughts may creep into his mind unconsciously; unbecoming words may escape his mouth unknowingly; his will may find it sometimes difficult to yield to the Lord; and he secretly may even endorse the thought of self-sufficiency. These are none but the works of the flesh. Therefore let it be known to believers that the flesh is able to exercise its power again at any time. It has not been eradicated from the body. But neither does the presence of the flesh mean sanctification is impossible to a believer. It is only when we have yielded our body to the Lord (Romans 6:13) that it is possible for us no longer to be under the dominion of the flesh but under the dominion of the Lord. If we follow the Holy Spirit and maintain an attitude of not letting sin reign over the body (Romans 6:12), then our feet are freed from stumbling and we experience sustained victory. Our body thus delivered becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit and is at liberty to do God's work. Now the way to *preserve* one's freedom from the flesh must be exactly the way this freedom is first obtained at that juncture of life and death when the believer says "yes" to God and "no" to the flesh. Far from it being an aoristic once for all event in time, the believer must maintain throughout his life an affirmative attitude towards God and a negative response towards the flesh. No believer today can arrive at the point of being beyond temptation. How necessary to watch and pray and even to fast that one may know how to walk according to the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, the believer ought to dilute neither God's purpose nor his own hope. He has the possibility of sinning, but he must not sin. The Lord Jesus has died for us and crucified our flesh with Himself on the cross; the Holy Spirit indwells us to make real to us what the Lord Jesus has accomplished. We have the absolute possibility of not being governed by the flesh. The presence of the flesh is not a call for surrender but a summons to watchfulness. The cross has crucified the flesh wholly; if we are minded to put to nought the evil works of the body in the power of the Holy Spirit we shall experience indeed the finished work of the cross. "So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh - for if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live" (Romans 8:12-13). Since God has bestowed such grace and salvation, the fault is altogether ours if we continue to follow the flesh. We are no longer debtors to it as we once were before we knew such salvation. If we now persist in living by the flesh it is because we want so to live, not because we must so live.

Many matured saints have experienced sustained victory over the flesh. Though the flesh abides, its power is reduced practically to zero. Its life with its nature and activities has been laid to rest so consistently by the cross of the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit that it is relegated to a state of existence as if not present. Due to the profound and persistent operation of the cross and the faithfulness of saints in following the Holy Spirit, the flesh, though existing, loses all its resistance. Even its

power to stimulate believers seems to be nullified. Such a complete triumph over the flesh is attainable by all believers.

“If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.” The entire relationship expressed in this verse hangs upon that word “if.” God has done all that is necessary; He can not do anything more. It is now up to us to take a stand. If we neglect this perfect salvation, how then shall we escape? “If you live according to the flesh you will die” - this is a warning. Although you are regenerated you nonetheless will lose out in your spiritual walk as though you are not alive. “If by the Spirit” you live, you also die, but you die in the death of Christ. Such a death is most authentic because that death will put to nought all the deeds of the flesh. One way or the other you will die. Which death do you choose: that which stems from lively flesh or that which issues in active spirit? If the flesh is alive the Holy Spirit can not live actively. Which life do you prefer: that of the flesh or that of the Spirit? God’s provision for you is that your flesh and its entire power and activities may be put under the power of Christ’s death on the cross. What is lacking in us is none other than death. Let us emphasise it before we speak of life, for there can be no resurrection without prior death. Are we willing to obey God’s will? Are we amenable to letting the cross of Christ come out practically in our lives? If so, we must by the Holy Spirit put to death all the wicked deeds of the body.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BOASTINGS OF THE FLESH

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FLESH

Do the works of the flesh include only what we hitherto mentioned? Or are there other fleshly works? Is the flesh now inactivated under the power of the cross?

Up to this point what we have stressed has been the sins of the flesh which are the lusts of the human body. But our attention now needs to be drawn to another side of the flesh. You will recall we stated earlier that the flesh comprises the works of the soul as well as the lusts of the body. Thus far we have touched upon the body side only, leaving the soul side nearly unscathed. The believer, it is quite true, must rid himself of the defiling sins of the body, but he also needs to resist the works of his soul; for these are no less corrupt in the eyes of God than the sins of the body.

According to the Bible the works of the “flesh” are of two kinds (though both are of the flesh): the unrighteous and the self-righteous. The flesh can produce not only defiling sins but also commendable morals: not only the base and the ignoble but the high and noble as well: not only sinful lust but good intention too. It is this latter side to which we must address ourselves now.

The Scriptures employ the word “flesh” to describe man’s corrupt nature or life which embraces soul and body. In the creative act of God soul is placed between spirit and body, that is, between what is heavenly or spiritual and what is earthly or physical. Its duty is to mingle these two, according each its proper place yet making them intercommunicative, that through such perfect harmony man ultimately may attain full spirituality. Unfortunately the soul yielded to temptation which arose from the physical organs, thus releasing itself from the authority of the spirit and embracing instead the control of the body. Soul and body accordingly were joined together to be flesh. Not only is the flesh “devoid of the spirit”; it also is directly opposed to the spirit. The Bible consequently asserts that the “flesh lusts against the spirit” (Galatians 5:17 literal).

The opposition manifested by the flesh against the spirit and against the Holy Spirit is two-fold: (1) by way of committing sin - rebelling against God and breaking the law of God; and (2) by way of performing good - obeying God and following the will of God. The body element of the flesh, full of sin and lust, naturally can not but express itself in many sins, much to the grief of the Holy Spirit. The soul part of the flesh, however, is not as defiled as the body. Soul is the life principle of man; it is his very self, comprising the faculties of will, mind and emotion. From the human viewpoint the works of the soul may not be all defiled. They merely centre upon one’s thought, idea, feeling, and like or dislike. Though these all are focused upon self, they are not necessarily defiling sins. The basic characteristic of the works of the soul is independence or self-dependence. Even though the soul side is therefore not as defiled as the body side, it nonetheless is hostile to the Holy Spirit. The flesh makes self the centre and elevates self-will above God’s will. It may serve God, but always according to its idea, not according to God’s. It will do what is good in its own eyes. Self is the principle behind every action. It may not commit what man considers sin: it may even try to keep God’s commandments with all its power: yet “self” never fails to be at the

heart of every activity. Who can fathom the deceitfulness and vitality of this self? The flesh opposes the spirit not just in sinning against God, but now even in the matter of serving to the righteous acts of the flesh which utterly fail to please God. Let us become profoundly informed here of precisely what the flesh is able to do: it is able to perform righteous deeds, and to do them expertly. We often conceive of the flesh in terms of lust; we consequently consider it strictly defiled, not realising that it includes more than the lust side. The activities of the various faculties of the soul may not be as defiled as lust. Furthermore, “lust” as sometimes used in the Bible has no connotation of defilement, as for example, “the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh” in Galatians 5:17 (Darby). We see that the Spirit also lusts against the flesh. Lust in this instance simply conveys the idea of an intense desire.

All which one does or is able to do before regeneration is but the efforts of the flesh. Thus it can do good as well as evil. The error the believer makes lies right here in that he only knows that the evil of the flesh must be destroyed without appreciating that the good of the flesh needs to be done away with as well. He is unaware of the fact that the righteousness of the flesh belongs as much to the flesh as its evil. The flesh remains flesh, no matter how good or how bad. What imperils a Christian is his ignorance of, or his reluctance to face up to, the necessity of ridding himself of everything of the flesh, including what is good. He must positively recognise that the good of the flesh is not one bit more presentable than its evil, for both pertain to the flesh. Unless the good flesh is dealt with no Christian can ever hope to be freed from the dominion of the flesh. For by letting his flesh do good he will soon find it working evil. If its self-righteousness is not destroyed, unrighteousness shall surely follow.

THE NATURE OF THE GOOD WORKS OF THE FLESH

God opposes the flesh so drastically because He knows its actual condition thoroughly. He desires His children to be released completely from the old creation and enter fully upon the new in experience. Whether good or bad, flesh is still flesh. The difference between the good which proceeds from the flesh and the good which flows from the new life is that the flesh always has self at its centre. It is my self who can perform and does perform good without the need of trusting in the Holy Spirit, without the necessity of being humble, of waiting on God, or of praying to God. Since it is I who wills and thinks and does without the need of God and who consequently considers how improved I am or how truly a somebody I have now become through my own efforts, is it not inevitable that I shall ascribe glory to myself? Obviously such deeds do not bring people to God; instead they puff up the self. God wants everyone to come to Him in a spirit of utter dependency, completely submissive to His Holy Spirit, and humbly waiting upon Him. Any good of the flesh which revolves around self is an abomination in the sight of God, for it does not proceed from the Spirit of the life of the Lord Jesus but is of self and glorifies self.

The Apostle protests in his Philippian letter that he “put no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3). It tends to be self-confident. Because they themselves are so able, the fleshly do not need to trust in the Holy Spirit. Christ crucified is the wisdom of God, but how much confidence a believer reposes in his own wisdom! He can read and preach the Bible, he can hear and believe the Word, but all are executed in the power of his mind, without experiencing the slightest inner registration of a need to depend

absolutely upon the instruction of the Holy Spirit. Many therefore believe they possess all the truth, though what they have comes merely from hearing others or from themselves searching the Scriptures. What is of man far exceeds what is of God. They do not have a heart to receive instruction from Him or to wait upon the Lord to reveal to them His truth in His light.

Christ crucified is also the power of God. But how much self-reliance obtains in Christian service. More effort is exerted in planning and arranging than in waiting upon the Lord. Double is the time expended on preparing the division and conclusion of a sermon than on receiving the power from on high. Yet not because the truth is unproclaimed or the person and work of Christ is unconfessed or the glory of God is unsought do all these works become dead before God, but because there is so much trust in the flesh. How we stress human wisdom and strive for satisfactory arguments in our messages: how we use appropriate illustrations and diverse other means to stir men's emotions: how we employ wise exhortations to induce men to make decisions! But where are the practical results? To what degree do we rely upon the Holy Spirit and to what degree upon the flesh? How can the flesh ever impart life to others? Is there actually any power in the old creation which can qualify people to inherit a part in the new creation?

Self-confidence and self-reliance, as we have said, are the notable traits of the good works of the flesh. It is impossible for the flesh to lean upon God. It is too impatient to tolerate any delay. So long as it deems itself strong it will never depend upon God. Even in a time of desperation the flesh continues to scheme and to search for a loophole. It never has the sense of utter dependency. This alone can be a test whereby a believer may know whether or not a work is of the flesh. Whatever does not issue from waiting upon God, from depending upon the Holy Spirit, is unquestionably of the flesh. Whatever one decides according to his pleasure in lieu of seeking the will of God emanates from the flesh. Whenever a heart of utter trust is lacking, there is the labour of the flesh. Now the things done may not be evil or improper; they in fact may be good and godly (such as reading the Bible, praying, worshiping, preaching); but if they are not undertaken in a spirit of complete reliance upon the Holy Spirit, then the flesh is the source of all. The old creation is willing to do anything - even to submit to God - if only it is permitted to live and to be active! However good the deed of the flesh may appear to be, "I", whether veiled or seen, always looms large on the horizon. The flesh never acknowledges its weakness nor admits to its uselessness; even should it become a laughing stock, the flesh remains unshaken in the belief in its ability.

"Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?" This uncovers a great truth. One may begin well, in the Spirit, but not continue well therein. Our experience bears out the fact of the relative ease with which a thing may begin in the Spirit but end up in the flesh. Often a newly apprehended truth is imparted by the Holy Spirit; after awhile, however, this truth has turned into a boasting of the flesh. The Jews in the early days committed just such an error. How frequently in the matters of obeying the Lord, of denying one's self afresh, of receiving power to save souls, one genuinely may rely upon the Holy Spirit at the outset; yet not long afterwards that same person changes God's grace into his own glory, treating what is of God as his possession. The same principle holds true in our conduct. Through the working of the Holy Spirit at the beginning there occurs a mighty transformation in one's life whereby

he loves what he previously hated and hates what he loved before. Gradually, though, “self” begins to creep in unawares. The person increasingly interprets these changes to be of his making and unto his own admiration; or he grows careless and gradually pushes on by self-trust rather than by dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Thousands of matters there are in the experiences of believers which begin well in the Spirit but terminate unfortunately in the flesh.

Why is it that many of God’s dear children eagerly seek a wholly consecrated walk and most earnestly desire the more abundant life but nevertheless fail? Often when listening to messages, conversing with people, reading spiritual books, or praying privately, the Lord makes known to them how perfectly possible it is to have a life of fullness in the Lord. They are made to sense the simplicity and sweetness of such a life and they see no obstacle in the way to their securing it. Indeed they experience a blessing with power and glory which they have never before known. Oh, how good it is! But alas, how soon it all vanishes. Why? How? Is it because their faith is imperfect? Or their consecration not absolute? Surely their faith and consecration have been utter towards the Lord. Then why such a failure? What is the reason for losing the experience and how can it be restored? The answer is simple and definite. They are trusting in the flesh and trying to make perfect by the flesh what was begun in the Spirit. They are substituting self for the Spirit. Self desires to lead the way while hoping that the Holy Spirit will come alongside and assist. The position and work of the Spirit have been replaced by that of the flesh. Absent is that complete reliance upon the Spirit’s leading for accomplishment. Absent also is a necessary waiting upon the Lord. Attempting to follow Him without denying the self is the root of all failures.

THE SINS WHICH FOLLOW

Should a believer be so self-confident that he dares to complete the task of the Holy Spirit in the energy of the flesh, he will not come into full spiritual maturity. He will instead drift until the sins he previously had overcome return to him again in power. Do not be surprised by what is said here. It is a spiritual truism that wherever or whenever the flesh is serving God, there and then the power of sin is strengthened. Why did the proud Pharisees become slaves to sin? Was it not because they were too self-righteous and served God too zealously? Why did the Apostle chide the Galatians? Why did they manifest the deeds of the flesh? Was it not because they sought to establish their own righteousness by works and to perfect by the flesh the work which the Holy Spirit had begun? The hazard for young believers is to stop short of the putting to death of the power of the flesh in doing good by only knowing what the cross does for the sinful side of the flesh. In so doing they retreat again into the sins of the flesh. The greatest blunder Christians commit upon experiencing victory over sin lies in not using the way of victory to sustain it; instead they try to perpetuate the victory by their works and determination. It may perhaps succeed for a while. Before long though they shall find themselves sliding back into their former sins, which may differ in form but not in essence. They then either slump into despair by concluding that constant and persistent triumph is impossible to achieve or they try to camouflage their sins without honestly confessing that they have sinned. Now what is it that causes such failure? Just as the flesh gives you strength to do righteously so it also gives you the power to sin. Whether good acts or evil, all are but the expressions of the same

flesh. If the flesh is not furnished opportunity to sin, it is willing to do good; and if once the opportunity to perform good is provided, the flesh will soon revert to sin.

Here Satan deceives God's children. If believers would habitually maintain the attitude of the flesh being crucified Satan could have no chance; for "the flesh is Satan's workshop." If the flesh in whole, not just in part, is truly under the power of the death of the Lord, Satan will be totally unemployed. He is consequently willing to allow the sinful part of our flesh to be offered unto death if he may only deceive us into retaining the good part. Satan is quite aware that should the good side remain intact the life of the flesh will continue to be kept alive. He still has a base from which to operate to recover that side which he has lost. He knows very well that the flesh could win and regain its victory in the realm of sin if the flesh succeeded in squeezing the Holy Spirit out in the matter of serving God. This explains why many Christians fall back into the service of sin after they have been set free. Should the spirit not actually be in complete and continuous control in the matter of worship, it will be unable to maintain dominion in daily life. If I have not yet entirely denied myself before God I can not deny myself before men, and therefore I can not overcome my hatred, temper and selfishness. These two are inseparable.

Through ignorance of this truth, the believers at Galatia fell into "biting and devouring one another" (Galatians 5:15). They attempted to perfect by the flesh what had been begun by the Holy Spirit, for they desired "to make a good showing in the flesh" in order that "they might glory in (their) flesh" (Galatians 6:12-13). Naturally their successes were very scanty in performing good by the flesh, while their failures in overcoming evil became quite numerous. Little did they realise that as long as they would serve God with their strength and ideas they doubtlessly would serve sin in the flesh. If they did not forbid the flesh to do good they could not prevent it from doing evil. The best way to keep from sinning is not to do any good by one's self. Being unconscious of the utter corruption of the flesh, the Galatian believers in their foolishness wished to make use of it, not recognising that the same corruption marked the flesh in boasting of doing good as in following lust. They could not do what God wanted them to do because on the one hand they tried to accomplish what the Holy Spirit had begun and on the other they vainly attempted to rid themselves of the passion and lust of the flesh.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BELIEVER'S ULTIMATE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE FLESH

GOD'S VIEW OF THE FLESH

We Christians need to be reminded once again of God's judgment upon the flesh. "The flesh," says the Lord Jesus, "is of no avail" (John 6:63). Whether it be the sin of the flesh or the righteousness of the flesh, it is futile. That which is born of the flesh, whatever it may be, is flesh, and can never be "un-fleshed." Whether it be the flesh in the pulpit, the flesh in the audience, the flesh in prayers, the flesh in consecration, the flesh in reading the Bible, the flesh in singing hymns, or the flesh in doing good - none of these, asserts God, can avail. However much believers may lust in the flesh, God declares it all to be unprofitable; for neither does the flesh profit the spiritual life nor can it fulfil the righteousness of God. Let us now note a few observations concerning the flesh which the Lord through the Apostle Paul makes in the letter to the Romans.

1. "To set the mind on the flesh is death" (Romans 8:6). According to God's view there is spiritual death in the flesh. The only escape is to commit the flesh to the cross. Regardless how competent it is to do good or to plan and plot so as to draw down the approval of men, God has pronounced upon the flesh simply one judgment: death.

2. "The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God" (Romans 8:7). The flesh is opposed to God. Not the slightest chance is there of peaceful co-existence. This holds true in regard not only to the sins which issue from the flesh but also to its noblest thoughts and actions. Obviously defiling sins are hostile to God, but let us observe that righteous acts can be done independently of God as well.

3. "It does not submit to God's law, indeed it can not" (Romans 8:7). The better the flesh works the farther away it is from God. How many of the "good" people are willing to believe in the Lord Jesus? Their self-righteousness is not righteousness at all; it is actually unrighteousness. None can ever obey all the teaching of the Holy Bible. Whether a person is good or bad, one thing is certain: he does not submit to God's law. In being bad he transgresses the law; in being good he establishes another righteousness outside of Christ and thus misses the purpose of the law - "through the law comes knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

4. "Those who are in the flesh can not please God" (Romans 8:8). This is the final verdict. Regardless how good a man may be, if the doing is out from himself it can not please God. God is pleased with His Son alone; aside from Him and His work no man nor work can delight God. What is performed by the flesh may seem to be quite good; nevertheless, because it derives from self and is done in natural strength it can not satisfy God. Man may devise many ways to do good, to improve, and to advance, but these are carnal and can not please Him. This is not only true of the unregenerate; it is likewise true of the regenerated person. However commendable and effective should anything be that is done in his own strength the believer fails to draw down upon himself the approval of God. God's pleasure or displeasure is not founded upon the principle of good and evil. Rather, God traces the source of all things. An action may be quite correct, yet God inquires, what is its origin?

From these Scripture references we can begin to appreciate how vain and futile are the efforts of the flesh. A believer who is shown precisely God's estimation of it will not blunder easily. As human beings we distinguish between good works and evil works; God on the other hand goes behind and makes a distinction as to the source of every work. The most excellent deed of the flesh brings down upon it the same displeasure of God as would the most defiled and wicked work, for they all are of the flesh. Just as God hates unrighteousness, so He abhors self-righteousness. The good acts done naturally without the necessity of regeneration or union with Christ or dependence upon the Holy Spirit are no less carnal before God than are immorality, impurity, licentiousness, etc. However beautiful man's activities may be, if they do not spring from a complete trust in the Holy Spirit they are carnal and are therefore rejected by God. God opposes, rejects and hates everything belonging to the flesh - regardless of outward appearances and regardless whether done by a sinner or a saint. His verdict is: the flesh must die.

THE BELIEVER'S EXPERIENCE

But how can a believer see what God has seen? God is so adamant against the flesh and its every activity; yet the believer appears to reject only its bad features while clinging affectionately to the flesh itself. He does not reject categorically the whole thing: he instead continues to do many things in the flesh: he even assumes a self-confident and proud attitude about it as though he were now rich with God's grace and qualified to perform righteously. The believer literally is making use of his flesh. Because of such self-deceit the Spirit of God must lead him over the most shameful path in order to make him know his flesh and attain God's view. God allows that soul to fall, to weaken, and even to sin, that he may understand whether or not any good resides in the flesh. This usually happens to the one who thinks he is progressing spiritually. The Lord tries him in order that he may know himself. Often the Lord so reveals His holiness to such a one that the believer can not but judge his flesh as defiled. Sometimes He permits Satan to attack him so that, out of his suffering, he may perceive himself. It is altogether a most difficult lesson, and is not learned within a day or night. Only after many years does one gradually come to realise how untrustworthy is his flesh. There is uncleanness even in his best effort. God consequently lets him experience

Romans 7 deeply until he is ready to acknowledge with Paul: "I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh" (Romans 7:18). How hard to learn to say this genuinely! If it were not for countless experiences of painful defeat the believer would continue to trust himself and consider himself able. Those hundreds and thousands of defeats bring him to concede that all self-righteousness is totally undependable, that no good abides in his flesh. Such dealing, however, does not terminate here. Self-judgment must continue. For whenever a Christian ceases to judge himself by failing to treat the flesh as useless and utterly detestable but assuming instead even a slightly self-flattering and vainglorious attitude, then God is compelled to run him again through fire in order to consume the dregs. How few are they who humble themselves and acknowledge their uncleanness! Unless such a state is realised God will not withdraw His dealings. Since a believer can not be freed from the influence of the flesh for a moment, he should never cease exercising the heart to judge himself; otherwise he will step once more into the boasting of the flesh.

Many suppose the Holy Spirit's conviction of sin pertains just to the people of the world, for does He not convict them of their sins into believing the Lord Jesus? But Christians ought to know that such operation of the Holy Spirit is as important in the saints as it is in the sinners. Out of necessity He must convict the saints of their sins, not merely once or twice but daily and incessantly. May we more and more experience the conviction of the Holy Spirit so that our flesh can be put under judgment unceasingly and never be able to reign. May we not lose, even for a moment, the true picture of our flesh and God's estimation of it. Let us never believe in ourselves and never trust our flesh again, as though it could ever please God. Let us always trust the Holy Spirit and at no time yield the slightest place to self.

If ever there was one in the world who could boast of his flesh that person must be Paul, for as to righteousness under the law he was blameless. And if any could boast of his flesh following regeneration, it certainly must be Paul again because he has become an apostle who has seen the risen Lord with his own eyes and who is used greatly by the Lord. But Paul dare not boast, for he knows his flesh. His Romans 7 experience enables him to realise fully who he is. God already has opened his eyes to see via his experience that there dwells in his flesh no good, only sin. The self-righteousness of which he boasted in the past he now knows to be refuse and sin. He has learned and learned well this lesson; hence he dare not trust the flesh again. But with this lesson he does not in any wise cease. No, Paul continues to learn. And so the Apostle declares that he can "put no confidence in the flesh. Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more" (Philippians 3:3-4). Despite the many reasons he can marshal for trusting his flesh (Philippians 3:5-6), Paul realises how God regards it and well understands how absolutely undependable and untrustworthy it is. If we continue reading Philippians 3 we shall discover how humble Paul is with respect to trusting in himself: "not having a righteousness of my own" (Philippians 3:9): "that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:11): "not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (Philippians 3:12). Should a believer aspire to attain spiritual maturity he must preserve forever that attitude which the Apostle Paul maintained throughout his spiritual walk; namely, "not that I have already attained." The Christian dare not entertain the slightest self-confidence, self-satisfaction or self-joy, as though he could trust his flesh.

If the children of God honestly strive for the life more abundant and are ready to accept God's assessment of the flesh, they will not esteem themselves stronger and better than others, notwithstanding their extensive spiritual progress. They will not utter such words as I of course am different from the others. If these believers are disposed to let the Holy Spirit reveal to them God's holiness and their corruption and do not fear to be shown too clearly, then hopefully they will come to perceive by the Spirit their corruption at an earlier time, with perhaps a consequent lessening of the painful experience of defeat. How lamentable it is, though, that even when one's intention may not be to trust the flesh, there may yet lurk beneath the surface some little impurity, for such a one still thinks he has some strength. In view of this, God must permit him to encounter diverse defeats in order to eliminate even that little confidence in himself.

THE CROSS AND THE DEEPER WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Because the flesh is grossly deceitful, the believer requires the cross and the Holy Spirit. Once having discerned how his flesh stands before God, he must experience each moment the deeper work of the cross through the Holy Spirit. Just as a Christian must be delivered from the sin of the flesh through the cross, so he must now be delivered from the righteousness of the flesh by the same cross. And just as by walking in the Holy Spirit the Christian will not follow the flesh unto sin, so too by walking in the Holy Spirit he will not follow the flesh unto self-righteousness.

As a fact outside the believer the cross has been accomplished perfectly and entirely: to deepen it is not possible. As a process within the believer the cross is experienced in an ever deepening way: the Holy Spirit will teach and apply the principle of the cross in point after point. If one is faithful and obedient he will be led into continually deeper experiences of what the cross has indeed accomplished for him. The cross objectively is a finished absolute fact to which nothing can be added; but subjectively it is an unending progressive experience that can be realised in an ever more penetrating way.

The reader by this time should know something more of the all inclusive character of his having been crucified with the Lord Jesus on the cross; for only on this basis can the Holy Spirit work. The Spirit has no instrument other than that cross. The believer by now should have a fresh understanding of Galatians 5:24. It is not “its passion’s and desires”, alone which have been crucified; the flesh itself, including all its righteousness’s as well as its power to do righteously, has been crucified on the cross. The cross is where both passions and desires and the spring of those passions and desires are crucified, however admirable they may be. Except as one sees this and is ready to deny all his flesh, bad or good, can he in fact walk after the Holy Spirit, be pleasing to God, and live a genuinely spiritual life. Such readiness must not be lacking on his part, for though the cross as an accomplished fact is complete in itself its realisation in a person’s life is measured by his knowledge and readiness and faith.

Suppose the child of God refuses to deny the good of his flesh. What will be his experience? His flesh may appear to be extremely clever and powerful in undertaking many activities. But however good or strong, the flesh can never answer to God’s demands. Hence when God actually summons him to prepare to go to Calvary and suffer, the Christian soon discovers his only response is to shrink back and to become as weak as water. Why did the disciples fail so miserably in the Garden of Gethsemane? Because “the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41). Weakness here causes failure there. The flesh can only display its apparently excellent power in matters which suit its taste. That is the reason the flesh draws back at God’s call. Its death is therefore essential, else God’s will can never be done.

Whatever has the intent and desire to develop ourselves that we may be seen and admired by others belongs to the flesh. There is natural good as well as natural bad in this flesh. John 1:13 informs us of “the will of the flesh.” The flesh can will and decide and plan to execute good in order to receive God’s favour. But it still belongs to human flesh and hence must go to the cross. Colossians 2:18 speaks of “the mind of his flesh” (Darby). The self-confidence of a Christian is nothing but trusting in his wisdom, thinking he knows every teaching of the Scriptures and how to serve God. And 2 Corinthians 1:12 mentions the “wisdom” of the flesh. It is highly dangerous to receive

the truths of the Bible with human wisdom, for this is a hidden and subtle method which invariably causes a believer to perfect with his flesh the work of the Holy Spirit. A very precious truth may be stored securely in the memory; however, it is merely in the mind of the flesh! The Spirit alone can quicken, the flesh profits nothing. Unless all truths are enlivened continually by the Lord, they profit neither ourselves nor others. We are not discussing sin here but the inevitable consequence of the natural life in man. Whatever is natural is not spiritual, We must not only deny our righteousness but also our wisdom. This too must be nailed to the cross.

Colossians 2:23 speaks of a “worship” or “devotion” of the flesh. This is “Worship” according to our opinion. Each method we devise to stir, seek, and acquire a sense of devotion is worship in the flesh. It is neither worship according to the teaching of Scripture nor worship under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Hence the possibility of walking by the flesh always exists; whether in the matter of worship, or in Christian work, or in Biblical knowledge, or in saving souls.

The Bible frequently mentions the “life” of the flesh. Unless this is yielded to the cross it lives within the saint just as much as in the sinner. The only difference is that in the saint there is spiritual opposition to it. But the possibility remains for him to take that life and draw upon it. The life of the flesh may help him to serve God, to meditate upon truth, to consecrate himself to the Lord. It may motivate him to perform many good acts. Yes, the Christian can take his natural life as true life in such a way as to make him feel he is serving the will of God.

We must understand that within man two different life principles exist. Many of us live a mixed life, obeying one and then the other of these two different principles. Sometimes we entirely depend on the Spirit’s energy; at other times we mix in our own strength. Nothing seems to be stable and steadfast. “Do I make my plans like a worldly man, ready to say Yes and No at once?” (2 Corinthians 1:17) A characteristic of the flesh is its fickleness: it alternates between Yes and No and vice versa. But the will of God is: “Walk not according to the flesh (not even for a moment) but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:4). We ought to accept God’s will.

“In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ” (Colossians 2:11). We should be willing to allow the cross, like a knife in circumcision, to cut off completely everything which pertains to the flesh. Such incision must be deep and clean so that nothing of the flesh is left concealed or can remain. The cross and the curse are inextricable (Galatians 3:13). When we consign our flesh to the cross we hand it over to the curse, acknowledging that in the flesh abides no good thing and that it deserves nothing but the curse of God. Without this heart attitude it is exceedingly difficult for us to accept the circumcision of the flesh. Every affection, desire, thought, knowledge, intent, worship and work of the flesh must go to the cross.

To be crucified with Christ means to accept the curse our Lord accepted. It was not a glorious moment for Christ to be crucified on Calvary (Hebrews 12:2). His being banged on the tree meant His being accursed of God (Deuteronomy 21:23). Consequently, for the flesh to be crucified with the Lord simply implies being accursed with the Lord. As we must receive the finished work of Christ on the cross, so must we enter into the fellowship of the cross. The believer needs to acknowledge that his

flesh deserves nothing else than the curse of death. His practical fellowship with the cross begins after he sees the flesh as God sees it. Before the Holy Spirit can take full charge over a person there first must be the complete committal of his flesh to the cross. Let us pray that we may know what the flesh exactly is and how it must be crucified.

Brethren, we are not humble enough to accept willingly the cross of Christ! We refuse to concede we are so helpless, useless, and utterly corrupt that we deserve nothing but death. What is lacking today is not a better living but a better dying! We need to die a good death, a thorough death. We have talked enough about life, power, holiness, righteousness; let us now take a look at death! Oh that the Holy Spirit would penetrate our flesh deeply by the cross of Christ that it might become a valid experience in our life! If we die correctly we shall live correctly. If we are united with Him in a death like His we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. May we ask the Lord to open our eyes to behold the absolute imperative of death. Are you prepared for this? Are you willing to let the Lord point out your weaknesses? Are you ready to be crucified openly outside the gate? Will you let the Spirit of the cross work within you? Oh, may we know more of His death! May we completely die!

We should be clear that the death of the cross is continuous in its operation. We can never enter upon a resurrection stage which leaves death entirely out, for the experience of resurrection is measured by the experience of death. A peril among those who pursue the ascension life is that they forget the categorical necessity of continuously putting to nought the flesh. They forsake the position of death and proceed to resurrection. This results in either treating lightly as of no serious hazard to their spiritual growth the works of the flesh, or in spiritualising them, that is, assuming the things of the flesh to be of the spirit. How essential to see that death is the foundation for everything. You may proceed to build but you should never destroy the foundation. The so-called risen and ascended realm will be unreal if the death of the flesh is not maintained continuously. Let us not be deceived into thinking we are so spiritually advanced that the flesh has no more power to entice us. This is merely the enemy's attempt to remove us from the basis of the cross in order to render us outwardly spiritual but inwardly carnal. Many such prayers as: "I thank you Lord, for I am no longer such and such but am now so and so" are simply echoes of the unacceptable prayer recorded in Luke 18:11-12. We are most susceptible to deception by the flesh when we are on the verge of being delivered from it. We must abide constantly in the Lord's death.

Our security is in the Holy Spirit. The safe way lies in our readiness to be taught, fearful lest we yield any ground to the flesh. We must submit ourselves cheerfully to Christ and trust the Holy Spirit to apply the dying of Jesus to us that the life of Jesus may be exhibited. Just as formerly we were filled with the flesh, so now we shall be filled with the Holy Spirit. When He is in complete control He will overthrow the power of the flesh and manifest Christ as our life. We shall be able then to say that the "life I now live in the flesh is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." Yet the foundation of that life is and always will be that "I have been crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20)!

If we live by faith and obedience we can expect the Spirit to do a most holy and wonderful work in us. "If we live by the Spirit" - this is our faith, for we believe that the Holy Spirit abides in us; then "let us also walk by the Spirit" - this is our obedience (Galatians 5:25). We ought to believe simply and restfully that our Lord has given us His Spirit, now abiding in us. Believe in His gift and trust that the Holy Spirit indwells you. Take this as the secret of Christ's life in you His Spirit dwells in your innermost spirit. Meditate on it, believe in it, and remember it until this glorious truth produces within you a holy fear and wonderment that the Holy Spirit indeed abides in you! Now learn to follow His leading. Such guidance emerges not from the mind or thoughts; it is something of life. We must yield to God and let His Spirit govern everything. He will manifest the Lord Jesus in our life because this is His task.

WORDS OF EXHORTATION

If we allow the Spirit of God to do a deeper work by the cross our circumcision will become increasingly real. "We are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3). That confidence in the flesh is relinquished through the circumcision performed without bands. The Apostle makes glorying in Christ Jesus the centre of everything. He explains to us that there is danger on the one side yet security on the other. Putting confidence in the flesh tends to destroy glorying in Christ Jesus, but worship in spirit gives us the blessed joy of life and truth. The Holy Spirit uplifts the Lord Jesus but humbles the flesh. If we genuinely desire to glory in Christ and to let Him secure glory in us, we must receive the circumcision of the cross and learn to worship in the Holy Spirit. Do not be impatient for impatience is of the flesh. Do not try different methods because they are useful solely in helping the flesh. We must distrust the flesh entirely, however good or able it may be. We should trust instead the Holy Spirit and submit to Him alone. With such trust and obedience the flesh will be humbly kept in its proper place of curse and accordingly lose all its power. May God be gracious to us that we may put no confidence in the flesh - yea, that we may look down upon ourselves and acknowledge how unreliable and utterly fruitless is our flesh. This is a very real death. Without it there can be no life.

"Do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh" (Galatians 5:13). We have obtained freedom in the Lord; let us not therefore give any opportunity to the flesh, for its rightful place is death. Do not unconsciously construe the activity of the Holy Spirit to be your own, but forever be on guard lest the flesh should be revived. Do not usurp the glory of His triumph and thereby afford the flesh a chance to resume operation. Do not grow overconfident following a few victories; if so, your fall can not be far away. When you have learned how to overcome and the flesh has long lost its power, never imagine that thereafter you are altogether triumphant over it. Should you not rely upon the Holy Spirit you will soon be thrown once more into a distressing experience. With holy diligence you must cultivate an attitude of dependency, else you will be the target of the flesh's attack. The least pride will supply the flesh an opportunity. Do not be fearful over the possibility you may lose face before others. The Apostle, immediately after his teaching on the crucifixion of the flesh and walking in the Spirit, said: "Let us not become vainglorious" (Galatians 5:26 Darby). If you humbly recognise how worthless you are before God, then you will not attempt to vaunt yourself before men. Suppose you hide the weakness of your flesh before men in order to receive glory. Are

you not unwittingly giving occasion to the flesh for its activity? The Holy Spirit can help and strengthen us, but He Himself will not supplant us in performing what is our responsibility. Therefore to fulfil that responsibility we on the one hand must maintain the attitude of rendering no occasion to the flesh; but on the other hand we must put that attitude into actual practice when called upon to deny the flesh in all the daily realities of our walk.

“Make no provision,” exhorts Paul, “for the flesh” (Romans 13:14). For the flesh to operate it needs a harbinger. That is why no provision ought to be made for it. If the flesh is to be kept confined to the place of curse, we must be watchful always. We must examine our thoughts continually to see whether or not we harbour the least self-conceit, for certainly such an attitude will give great opportunity to the flesh. Our thoughts are most important here because what - at is provided for in the secrecy of our thought life will come forth openly thoughts are most important here because what is provided for in the secrecy of our thought life will come forth openly in words and deeds. The flesh must never be offered any ground. Even when conversing with others we need to be on the alert lest in many words the flesh is equipped to perform its work. We may love to say many things, but if these are not uttered in the Holy Spirit it is better to say nothing. The same applies to our deeds. The flesh can conjure up many plans and methods and be full of expectations. It has its opinions, power and ability. To others and even to ourselves, these may appear to be quite commendable and acceptable. But let us be reckless enough to destroy even the best of them for fear of violating the Lord’s commandment. The best the flesh has to offer must be delivered mercilessly to death for the simple reason that it belongs to the flesh. The righteousness of the flesh is as abhorrent as is its sin. Its good acts should be repented of just as much and as humbly as its sinful deeds. We must always maintain God’s view of the flesh. In case we fail, we must examine ourselves, confess our sin, and resort to the cleansing of the precious blood. “Let us purify ourselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit” (2 Corinthians 7:1 Darby). Not only must there be the work of the Holy Spirit and that of the precious blood; we ourselves must work towards cleansing too. We must search out all the uncleannesses of the flesh and consign them to the cross of our Lord. Even the best that is done - though it may not be sinful according to man - is nevertheless condemned by God as unclean. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” This covers both the person and his deeds. God is not so much interested in the form or shape as in the source. Hence we must be purified not only from our sins but also from every deed of the flesh. “Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh” (1 Peter 2:11).

PART THREE

THE SOUL

CHAPTER ONE

DELIVERANCE FROM SIN AND THE SOUL LIFE

THE WAY OF DELIVERANCE

Romans 6 lays the foundation for the Christian's deliverance from sin. Such deliverance God provides for every believer; all may enter in. Moreover, let us be unmistakably clear that this liberation from the power of sin may be experienced the very hour a sinner accepts the Lord Jesus as Saviour and is born anew. He need not be a long time believer and undergo numerous defeats before he can receive this gospel. Delay in accepting the gospel according to Romans 6 is due either to the incomplete gospel he has heard or to his unwillingness in wholly accepting and fully yielding to it. Whereas actually this blessing should be the common possession of all the newly born.

THE SPIRITUAL MAN

Chapter 6 begins with a call to reminisce, not to anticipate. It directs our attention to the past, to what is already ours: "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin" (Romans 6:6 Darby). In this single verse we find three major elements:

1. "sin" (singular in number);
2. "old man"; and
3. "body" (the body of. sin).

These three are vastly different in nature and play unique roles in the act of sinning. Sin here is that which commonly is called the root of sin. The Bible informs us that we were formerly slaves of sin. Sin had been the master. First of all therefore, we need to recognise that sin possesses power, for it enslaves us. It emits this power incessantly to draw us into obedience to its old man so that we might sin. The old man represents the sum total of everything we inherit from Adam. We can recognise the old man by knowing what the new man is, because whatever is not of the new man must belong to the old. Our new man embraces everything which flows newly from the Lord at our regeneration. Hence the old man betokens everything in our personality which is outside the new - our old personality and all which belongs to the old nature. We sin because this old man loves sin and is under its power. Now the body of sin refers to this body of ours. This corporeal part of man has become the inevitable puppet in all our sinning. It is labelled the body of sin because it likewise is subject to the power of sin, fully laden with the lusts and desires of sin. And it is through this body that sin manages to express itself, else it will be merely an invisible power.

To recapitulate then, sin is the power which pulls us to do sin. Old man is the non-corporeal part of what we inherit from Adam. The body of sin is the corporeal element we inherit from him.

The process of sinning follows this order: first, sin; next, the old man; lastly, the body. Sin exudes its power to attract man and force him to sin. Since the old man delights in sin, he condones sin and bends to it, instigating the body to sin. Wherefore the body serves as the puppet and actually practices sin. It is through the joint enterprise of these

three elements that sin is committed. Present always are the compulsion of sin's power, the inclination of the old man, and the practice of the body.

Now how can a man be delivered from sin? Some theorise that since sin is the first cause we must annihilate it in order to attain victory; accordingly they advocate "the eradication of sin." Once the root of sin is pulled out, think these, we never shall sin again and are obviously sanctified. Others argue that we must subdue our body if we desire to overcome sin, for is it not our body, they ask, which practices sin? So there arises in Christendom a group of people who promote asceticism. They use many techniques to suppress themselves for they anticipate that once they overcome the demands of their bodies they shall be holy. None of these is God's way. Romans 6:6 is transparent as to His way. He neither eradicates the root of sin within nor suppresses the body without. Rather, God deals with the old man in between.

GOD'S FACT

The Lord Jesus in going to the cross took with Him not only our sins but also our beings. Paul enunciates this fact by proclaiming "that our old man has been crucified with him." The verb "crucified" in the original is in the aorist tense, connoting that our old man was once and forever crucified with Him. As the cross of Christ is a fact accomplished, so our being crucified with Him is additionally an accomplished fact. Whoever questions the reality of the crucifixion of Christ? Why, then, should we doubt the reality of the crucifixion of our old man?

Many saints, upon hearing the truth of co-death, immediately assume that they ought to die, and so they try their best to crucify themselves. Either lack of God's revelation or lack of faith accounts for this attitude. They not only do this themselves; they teach others so to do as well. The results are too obvious: no power is theirs to be freed from sin and their old man they feel will not die.

This is a grievous misjudgment. The Bible never instructs us to crucify ourselves. Precisely the opposite are we told We are taught that when Christ went to Calvary He took us there and had us crucified. We are not instructed to begin crucifying ourselves now; instead the Scriptures assure us that our old man was dealt with at the time Christ went to the cross. Romans 6:6 alone is sufficient to substantiate this. There is not the remotest idea conveyed of desiring to crucify ourselves, nor does the Word in the slightest sense imply that our crucifixion awaits realisation. The verse in Romans 6 permits no room for doubt when it categorically pronounces that we were crucified with Christ, a fact already accomplished. This is truly the effect of the most precious phrase in the Bible - "in Christ." It is because we are in Him and are united with Him that we can say that when Christ went to the cross we went there. in Him, that when Christ was crucified we too were crucified in Him. What a wonderful reality that we are in Christ!

Mere mental assimilation of these truths can not withstand temptation, however. The revelation of God is positively essential. The Spirit of God must reveal how we are in Christ and how we are united with Him in one. He must also show us distinctly how our old man was crucified with Christ for the simple reason that we are in Christ. This can not be simply a mental comprehension; it must be a disclosure of the Holy Spirit. When a truth is unfolded by God it most naturally becomes a power in man, who then

finds himself able to believe. Faith comes through revelation. Without the latter the former is impossible. This explains why many do not have faith, for though they mentally understand they do not have God's revelation. Therefore, brethren, pray until God gives us revelation so that "knowing this" in our spirit we may truly confess "that our old man has been crucified with him."

What is the consequence of the crucifixion of our old man? Again the answer comes to us unequivocally - "that the body of sin might be annulled." "Annulled" should be rendered "withered" or "unemployed." Beforehand when sin stirred, our old man responded and consequently the body practiced sin. With the crucifixion of the old man and its replacement by the new man, sin may still stir within and attempt to exert its pressure, but it fails to find the consent of the old man in driving the body to sin. Sin can no longer tempt the believer for he is a new man; the old has died. The body's occupation was formerly that of sinning but this body of sin is now unemployed because the old man was set aside. It is not able to sin and hence has been denied its job. Praise the Lord, this is what He has furnished us.

Why does God crucify our old man with Christ and render our body jobless? His purpose is that "we should no longer serve sin." What God has done in this regard makes it possible for us not to yield thereafter to the pressure of sin nor to be bound by its power. Sin will exercise no dominion over us. Hallelujah! We must praise God for this deliverance.

THE TWO ESSENTIALS

How shall we enter into such blessing? Two elements are indispensable. First, "reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11 Darby). This is the essential of faith. When God avows that our old man was crucified with Christ we believe His Word and "reckon ourselves as dead." How then do we die? "We reckon ourselves as dead to sin." When God affirms that we are resurrected with Christ we again trust His Word and "reckon ourselves alive." How then do we live? "We reckon ourselves as alive to God." This reckoning is none other than believing God according to His Word, When God says our old man was crucified, we account ourselves dead; when He insists we are made alive, we reckon ourselves as alive. The failure of many lies in the desire to feel, to see and to experience this crucifixion and resurrection before trusting in the Word of God.

These do not realise God has done it already in Christ and that if only they would believe His Word by reckoning that what He has done is true, His Holy Spirit would give them the experience. His Spirit would communicate to them what is in Christ.

Second, "neither yield your members instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God as alive from among the dead and your members instruments of righteousness to God" (Romans 6:13 Darby). This is the essential of consecration. If we persist in holding on to something which God wants us to relinquish, sin shall have dominion over us, and our reckoning shall be futile. If we fail to yield our members as godly instruments of righteousness to speak and do what He desires and go where He directs, should we be surprised we are not yet delivered from sin Whenever we refuse to relinquish or we offer resistance to God, sin shall return to its dominion. Under such circumstances we naturally lose the power to reckon, that is, to believe God's Word.

In our ceasing to exercise faith and to reckon, can we still be said to be positionally in Christ? Yes, but we are living no longer in Him according to the sense of the “abide in me” of John 15. Accordingly we are unqualified to experience what is factual in Christ, even our crucifixion.

Now we may infer from any defeat of ours that it is due either to lack of faith or failure to obey. No other reason can suffice. Conceivably a defeat could flow from both these reasons; if not from both, then from one or the other. We ought to learn how to live in Christ by faith, never seeing or thinking of ourselves outside of Him. Learn to believe daily that we are in Christ and that whatever is true of Him is true of us. Likewise, through the power of God we must learn daily to keep our consecration unspotted. Count all things as refuse, for there is nothing in the world we can not relinquish for the Lord and nothing that we should want to keep for ourselves. Let us be disposed to respond positively to God’s demands, however difficult or contrary to the flesh they may be. For God no cost is too high. Anything can be sacrificed if only we may please Him. Let us daily learn to be obedient children.

Had we so reckoned and so yielded, we would now be enjoying what the Word of God has manifestly declared: “sin will have no dominion over you.”

THE RELATION BETWEEN SIN AND THE BODY

A Christian enters a decidedly hazardous period of his life upon coming to know the truth of co-death and experiencing something of freedom from sin. If at this juncture he receives good instruction and permits the Holy Spirit to apply the cross to himself in a deeper way, he eventually will reach spiritual maturity. But if the believer is content to view his experience of victorious life over sin as the apogee of attainment and forbids the cross to contravene his soul life then he will abide in the soulical realm and mistake his soulical experience for a spiritual one. In spite of the fact his old man was dealt with, the believer’s soul life remains untouched by the cross. The will, mind and emotion will therefore continue to function without any check; and the result: his experience is confined to the realm of the soul.

What we need to know is how far such deliverance from sin actually has affected our being - what it has touched but also what it has not yet touched which should be. More especially must we understand that sin has a very particular relationship to our body. Unlike many philosophers we do not consider the body intrinsically evil, but we do confess that the body is the province of sin’s domination. In Romans 6:6 we find the Holy Spirit describing our body as “the body of sin,” for it is nothing but that before we experience the treatment of the cross and yield our members to God as instruments of righteousness. Sin had seized our body and forced it into servitude. It became sin’s fortress, instrument and garrison. Wherefore no designation is more fitting than that of “the body of sin.” A careful reading of Romans 6 through 8, which tell of deliverance from sin, will uncover not only what is the relation of the body to sin but also what is God’s perfect salvation in releasing our body completely from serving sin into serving Him.

In Romans 6 the Apostle sets forth these statements:

“the sinful body might be destroyed” - Romans 6:6

“let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions” - Romans 6:12

“do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness” - Romans 6:13

“yield ... your members to God as instruments of righteousness” - Romans 6:13

In Romans 7 God uses Paul to speak of the body in the following terms:

“at work in our members” - Romans 7:5

“I see in my members another law” - Romans 7:23

“making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members” - Romans 7:23

“who will deliver me from this body of death?” - Romans 7:24

In Romans 8 the pronouncements of the Holy Spirit through Paul are very plain:

“your bodies are dead because of sin” - Romans 8:10

“will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you” - Romans 8:11

“if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live” - Romans 8:13

“the redemption of our bodies” - Romans 8:23

From these passages we can begin to discern God’s particular concern towards our body. God is aware that the body is sin’s special sphere of operation. Man has become a slave to sin because his body is sin’s puppet. But the moment his body is unemployed from sin the person ceases to be its slave. A man thus freed from sin actually experiences the liberation of his body from its power and influence.

The purpose in crucifying the old man is to release the body from the dominion of sin. With the old man, sin’s partner, crucified and the new man taking its place, sin’s power over the body is broken, because without the co-operation of the old man sin can not directly use the body.

It must be emphasised that to be delivered from the power of sin merely means to have our body liberated. (Of course our perfect redemption which also includes the deliverance from the presence of sin lies in the future). Not yet dealt with is the life of the soul upon which we lean. If we consider victory over sin as life on the highest plateau then we are most foolish. We are accepting the “annulling” or “withering” of the body as life supreme but ignoring the fact that over and above the body of sin stands the natural soul which requires as much dealing as does the body. A believer’s spiritual odyssey is bound to be shallow if he only knows the body unemployed (wonderful as that may be) but fails to experience the soul life denied.

Mention was made earlier of the active self or soul engaged in the work of God. The body may be “Withered” but the soul remains quite active. It may express itself in many different ways yet it invariably centres upon self. Believers who live in the soul

incline towards either will or mind or emotion. They may even shift in their inclinations. But though outward appearances may differ, the inward clinging to the soul characterises them all. Those who are disposed towards volition will walk according to their own delight and refuse the will of God. Those whose propensity is towards mind will order their way according to their own wisdom and neglect to receive with quietness the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their intuition. While those whose natural disposition is emotional will seek for pleasures in their feelings. Whatever one's bent, each will view his tendency as life supreme. No matter the direction of the inclination, one thing is common to all such people: all live in themselves: all live in what they naturally possessed before believing the Lord - whether talent, ability, eloquence, cleverness, attractiveness, zealousness, or whatever. In principle, soul life is natural strength; in manifestation, its expression is either by stubborn unyielding or by self-conceit or by pleasure seeking. If therefore a believer lives by his soul he will draw naturally upon his reservoir of strengths and will exhibit a particular strength in one or more of these ways. Unless the believer offers his soul life to death, he shall cultivate that life, incur the displeasure of God, and miss the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

THE SOUL AS LIFE

When we say the soul is the natural life of man we mean it is the power which preserves us alive in the flesh. Our soul is our life. The original word employed in Genesis 1:21, 24 for "living creature(s)" is "soul" because this soul is the life human beings and other living creatures share in common. This is the power we naturally possess and by which we live before our, regeneration; it is the life which every man has. The Greek lexicon gives the original meaning of *psuche* as "animal life"; so that soul life is what makes man a living creature. It belongs to the natural. Though the soul life may not necessarily be evil - since many sins have been overcome by believers through their old man being crucified with Christ - yet it remains natural. It is the life of man; hence it is most human. It makes man a perfectly human being. Perhaps it is good, loving and humble. Nonetheless it is but human.

This life is entirely distinct from the new life the Holy Spirit gives us at new birth. What the Holy Spirit imparts is God's uncreated life; this other is but man's created life. The Holy Spirit grants us a supernatural power; this other is merely the natural. The Holy Spirit gives the *zoe*; this other is the *psuche*.

Life is that power within a man which animates every member of his body. Hence this inward soulful power finds expression through the outward physical activity. The outer activity is but the effect of the inner power. What therefore lies unseen behind the activity is the substance of life. All we naturally "are" is included in that life. This is our soul life.

SOUL AND SIN

Soul life supplies the energy for executing whatever is commanded. If the spirit rules, the soul will be directed by the spirit to exercise its volition to decide or to do on behalf of the spirit's desire; if however sin reigns in the body, the soul will be enticed by sin into using its volition to decide or to do what sin desires. The soul works according to its master, for its function is the execution of orders. Prior to man's fall it

committed its power to the spirit's direction; but after the fall it responded completely to sin's coercion. Because man turned into a fleshly being this sin which afterwards reigned in the body became man's nature, enslaving the soul and the life of man and compelling him to walk after sin. In this way sin became man's nature while soul became man's life.

We often treat life and nature as synonymous and co-significant. Strictly speaking they are different. Life it would appear is much broader than nature. Each life possesses its special nature which, being the natural principle of existence, includes life's disposition and desire. While we are yet sinners our life is our soul and our nature is sin. By the soul we live and the disposition and desire of our life are according to sin. To put it another way, what decides our walk is sin but what supplies the strength to walk in that fashion (sinfully) is the soul. The nature of sin initiates while the life of the soul energises. Sin originates, soul executes. Such is the condition of an unbeliever.

When a believer accepts the grace of our Lord Jesus in being his substitute on the cross, although he may remain woefully ignorant of his being crucified with Christ he is given God's life nonetheless and has his spirit quickened. This imparted new life brings with it a new nature as well. Hence there now exists both two lives and two natures in the believer: the soul life and the spirit life on the one side, the sin nature and God's nature on the other.

These two natures - old and new, sinful and godly - are fundamentally unlike, irreconcilable and un-mixable. The new and the old daily strive for authority over the whole man. During this initial stage the Christian is a babe in Christ because he is yet fleshly. Most variable and most painful are his experiences, punctuated by both successes and failures. Later on he comes to know the deliverance of the cross and learns how to exercise faith in reckoning the old man as crucified with Christ. He is thereby freed from that sin which has paralysed the body. With his old man crucified the believer is empowered to overcome and enjoys in actual experience the promise that "... sin will have no dominion over you."

With sin under his feet and all lusts and passions of the flesh behind his back, the believer now enters a new realm. He may picture himself wholly spiritual. When he turns to eye those others who remain entangled in sin he can not but feel elated and wonder how he has reached the summit of spiritual life. Little does this one realise that far from being completely spiritual he still remains partially carnal; he is yet:

A SOULISH OR CARNAL CHRISTIAN

Why is this so? For we see that the soul life continues though the cross has dealt with the believer's sinful nature. It is true that every sin erupts from that sinful nature, with the soul simply a willing servant; nevertheless the soul as inherited from Adam can not avoid being infected with Adam's fall. It may not be entirely defiled; however, it is natural and quite unlike God's life. The corrupted old man in the believer has died but his soul remains the power behind his walk. On the one hand the sinful nature has been drastically touched but on the other hand the self life still persists and therefore can not escape being soulish. Although the old man may cease to direct the soul, the latter continues to energise the daily walk of man. Since God's nature has replaced his sinful nature all man's inclinations, desires and wishes are naturally good, so unlike his

former unclean state. It must not be overlooked, however, that what executes these new desires and wishes continues to be the old soul power.

To depend upon the soul life to carry out the wish of the spirit is to use natural (or human) force to accomplish supernatural (or divine) goodness. This is simply trying to fulfil God's demand with self-strength. In such a condition the believer is still weak in positively doing right, even though negatively he has overcome sin. Few are those disposed honestly to acknowledge their weakness and incapability and to lean utterly upon God. Who will confess his uselessness if he has not been humbled by the grace of God? Man takes pride in his prowess. For this reason he can hardly entertain the thought of trusting the Holy Spirit for doing right but is sure to correct and improve his former behaviour by his soul power. The danger for him is in attempting to please God with his own power instead of learning to be strengthened with might in his spirit life through the Holy Spirit so that he may follow the dictates of his new nature. In point of fact his spiritual life is still in its infancy, not having grown yet to that maturity wherein he is able to manifest every virtue of God's nature. If the believer fails to wait humbly and to rely entirely upon God he inevitably employs his natural, soulful vitality to meet God's requirements placed upon His children. He does not understand that however good to the human outlook his efforts may appear to be, they can never please God. Because by so doing, he is mingling what is of God with what is of man, expressing heavenly desire by means of earthly power. And the consequence? He fails miserably to be spiritual and continues to abide in the soul.

Man does not know what soul life is. Simply put, it is what we customarily term self life. It is a serious mistake not to distinguish between sin and self. Many of the Lord's people view these two as one and the same entity. What they do not recognise is that both in Biblical teaching and in spiritual experience they are distinctive. Sin is what defiles, is against God and is totally wicked; self may not necessarily be so. On the contrary, it can at times be very respectable, helpful and lovely. Take, for example, the soul in relation to Bible reading, certainly a most commendable activity. Attempting to understand the Holy Bible with one's native talent or ability is not considered sinful; yet approaching the Bible in this way is undeniably the work of self. Soul winning, too, if accompanied by methods that accord merely with one's own thought, will be full of self. And how often pursuit after spiritual growth originates in the natural self perhaps only because we can not bear the thought of falling behind or because we seek some personal gain. Bluntly stated, the doing of good is not sin but the manner, methods, or motive in such good - doing may be surfeited with our self. Its source is man's natural goodness, not that supernatural kind given by the Holy Spirit through regeneration. Many are innately merciful, patient, and tender. Now for these to show mercy or patience or tenderness is not committing sin; but because these "good" traits belong to their natural life and are the work of the self they can not be accepted by God as something spiritual. These acts are performed not by complete reliance upon God's Spirit but by trusting in self strength.

These few examples illustrate how sin and self do differ from each other. As we proceed in our spiritual walk we shall discover many more instances of how sin may be absent but self fully present. It almost seems inevitable that self will creep into the most holy work and the noblest spiritual walk.

Having long been bound by sin the child of God easily construes freedom from its power to be life par excellence. Just here lurks the greatest danger in the days ahead for this one who now concludes that all pernicious elements within him have been rooted out. He is unaware that even if the old man has died to sin and the body of sin is withered, "sin" nevertheless has not died. It merely has become an unseated sovereign which if given the opportunity will put forth its best effort to regain its throne. The believer's experience of being delivered from sin may even continue but he is not thereby rendered perfect. He has yet to deal unremittingly with his "self."

How deplorable it is should Christians look upon themselves as wholly sanctified when, having sought sanctification, they experienced deliverance. They are ignorant of the truth that liberation from sin is only the first step in overcoming life. It is but the initial victory given by God as an assurance to them of the many more victories that are to follow. Triumph over sin is like a door: One step taken and you are in; triumph over self is like a pathway: you walk and walk for the rest of your days. Upon overthrowing sin we are called next to overcome ourselves - even the best of self, the zealous and religious self - daily.

If one knows only emancipation from sin but has had no experience of self-denial or loss of soul life, he places himself inescapably in the position of resorting to his natural soulful strength to accomplish God's will in his walk. He does not realise that, sin apart, two other powers reside within him, spirit power and soul power. Spirit power is God's power received spiritually at regeneration, while soul power is his own granted him naturally at birth.

Whether one is to be a spiritual man or not largely hinges upon how he handles these two forces within him. The believer enters the ranks of the spiritual by drawing upon the spiritual power to the exclusion of that of his soul. Should he use his soul power or even a combination of the two, the result inevitably shall be a soulish or carnal Christian. God's way is plain. We must deny everything originating in ourselves - what we are, what we have, what we can do - and move entirely by Him, daily apprehending the life of Christ through the Holy Spirit. Failure to understand or to obey leaves us no other alternative but to live hereafter by the power of the soul. A spiritual Christian therefore is one whose spirit is led by God's Spirit. He draws the power for his daily walk from the life given by the Holy Spirit Who indwells his spirit. He does not abide on earth seeking his own will but the will of God. He does not trust in his cleverness to plan and to perform service towards God. The rule of his walk is to dwell quietly in the spirit, no further influenced or controlled by the outer man.

The soulish Christian is eminently different. Though he is in possession of a spirit power he does not draw upon it for his life. In his daily experience he persists in making the soul his life and continues to lean upon his self power. He follows the dictates of his pleasure and delight because he has failed to learn to obey God. To God's work he brings his natural wisdom, devising many ingenious arrangements. His everyday existence is governed and affected by the outer man.

To recapitulate what has been said, the problem of the two natures has been answered but the problem of the two lives remains unsolved. The spirit life and the soul life coexist within us. While the first is in itself exceedingly strong, the second manages to control the entire being because it is so deeply rooted in man. Unless one is disposed to

deny his soul life and permit his spirit life to grasp the reins, the latter has little chance to develop. This is abhorrent to the Father for the child of God deprives himself of spiritual growth. He must be instructed that overcoming sin, blessed though it surely is, is but the bare minimum of a believer's experience. There is nothing astonishing in it. *Not* to overcome sin is what ought to astonish us. Does not the Scripture legitimately ask: "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Romans 6:2) For to believe that the Lord Jesus died for us as our substitute is inseparable from believing that we have died with Him (Romans 6:6). What should amaze us then is not the cessation of sinning in those who have died to sin but the continuance of that phenomenon in them as though yet alive. The first condition is quite normal; the second, altogether abnormal.

To be freed from sin is not a difficult task when viewed in the light of the finished, perfect and complete salvation of God. A believer must proceed to learn the more advanced and perhaps more formidable and deeper lesson of abhorring his life. Not only must we hate the sinful nature which comes from Adam but also the natural vitality upon which we now rely for our living. We must be willing to deny the good which is produced by the flesh as well as the evil of the flesh. Do not merely forsake all sins; in addition, deliver up this life of sin to death. A walk in the Holy Spirit is not only not committing sin but also not allowing self to abide. The Holy Spirit can manifest His power solely in those who live by Him. Whoever walks by his natural strength can not expect to witness the mighty realities of the Holy Spirit. We need to be released from everything natural as well as from everything sinful. If we insist upon walking according to man, not just the sinful, but the all inclusive natural, man we reject the rule of the Holy Spirit in our lives. How can He exhibit His power if we are set free from sin and yet continue to think as "men" think, desire as "men" desire, live and work as "men" do? We are not leaning entirely upon the Holy Spirit of God to work in us. If we genuinely desire His fullness we first must break the all pervasive influence of the soul.

THE EXPERIENCE OF A MIXED SOUL AND SPIRIT

We do not mean to imply that soulish believers experience nothing except what belongs to the soul; though saints of this type are plentiful. Soulsh ones do enjoy some spiritual experiences. Those however are rather mixed with the soulsh mingling with the spiritual. These believers are acquainted with the outline of a spiritual walk because the Holy Spirit has led them so to do. But due to many hindrances they frequently fall back upon natural energy to supply strength for their living, expecting to fulfil the holy requirements of God by their flesh. These follow their desires and ideas and seek sensual pleasure and mental wisdom. While they may be spiritual in knowledge, in point of fact they are soulsh. The Holy Spirit genuinely dwells in their spirit and has accorded them the experience of conquering sin through the operation of the cross. But He is not allowed to lead their lives. While some may be ignorant of the law of the Spirit many others may love their soul life just too much to give it up.

Now spirit and soul are easy to distinguish in experience. Spiritual life is maintained simply by heeding the direction of the spirit's intuition. If a believer walks according to God's Spirit he will not originate or regulate anything; he will instead wait quietly for the voice of the Holy Spirit to be heard in his spirit intuitively and assume for himself the position of a subordinate. Upon hearing the inner voice he rises up to work,

obeying the direction of intuition. By so walking the believer remains a steadfast follower. The Holy Spirit alone is the Originator. Moreover he is not self-dependent. He does not employ his prowess in executing God's will. Whenever action is required the believer approaches God intently - fully conscious of his weakness - and petitions God to give him a promise. Having received God's promise he then acts, counting the power of the Holy Spirit as his. In an attitude such as this God will surely grant power according to His Word.

Precisely the opposite is the soulish life. Self is the centre here. When a Christian is said to be soulish he is walking according to self. Everything originates from himself. He is governed not by the voice of the Holy Spirit in the inner man but rather by the thoughts, decisions and desires of his outer man. Even his feeling of joy arises from having his own wishes satisfied. It will be recalled that the body was said to be the shell of the soul, which in turn forms the sheath of the spirit. As the Holy Place is outside the Holy of Holies so the soul is outside the spirit. In such intimate proximity how easy it is for the spirit to be influenced by the soul. The soul has indeed been delivered from the tyranny of the body; it is controlled no longer by the lusts of the flesh; but a similar separation of the spirit from the control of the soul has not yet occurred in the soulish Christian. Before the believer had overcome his fleshly lusts his soul had been joint partner with his body. They together constituted one enormous life, the other nature. As it was with soul and body so is it now with his spirit and his soul. The spirit is merged with the soul. The former provides the power while the latter gives the idea, with the result that his spirit is too often affected by his soul.

Because it is surrounded by the soul (even buried therein), the spirit is stimulated easily by the mind. A born again person ought to possess unspeakable peace in the spirit. Unfortunately this tranquillity is disturbed by the stimulating lust from the soul with its numerous independent desires and thoughts. Sometimes the joy which floods the soul overflows into the spirit, inducing the believer to think he is the happiest person in the world; at other times sorrow pervades and he becomes the most unhappy person. A soulish Christian frequently encounters such experiences. This is because the spirit and the soul remain undivided. They need to be split asunder.

When such believers bear some teaching on the division of spirit and soul, they would like very much to know where their spirit is. They may search diligently, but they are unable to sense the presence of their spirit. Without any real experience there, they naturally are at a loss how to distinguish their spirits from their souls. Since these two are so closely linked it is common for them to treat soulish experiences (such as joy, vision, love, etc.) as superlative spiritual ones.

Before a saint arrives at the stage of spirituality he is sure to be dwelling in a mixed condition. Not content with a quietude in his spirit, he will seek a joyous feeling. In his daily living the believer sometimes will follow the leading of intuitive knowledge and sometimes his thought, sensation or wish. Such a mixture of spirit and soul reveals that two antithetical sources reside in the believer: one belongs to God, one belongs to man: one is of the Spirit, the other is of himself: one is intuitive, the other rational: one is supernatural, the other natural: one belongs to the spirit, the other belongs to the soul. If the child of God carefully examines himself beneath the beam of God's light, he will perceive the two kinds of power within him. He likewise will recognise that

sometimes he lives by the one life and at other times by the other. On the one hand he knows he must walk in faith by trusting in the Holy Spirit; on the other hand, he reverts to walking according to himself on the basis of what he terms spiritual feelings. He lives far more in the soul than in the spirit. The degree of his soulishness varies according to (1) his understanding of the spirit life with its principle of co-operating with God and (2) his actual yielding to the soul life. He can live entirely in an emotional, idea ideational or activist world, or he can even live alternately by his soul and by his spirit. Unless he is instructed by God through the revelation of the Holy Spirit in his spirit, he shall be unable to abhor the soulish life and to love the spirit life. Whichever life he chooses determines the path he shall follow.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EXPERIENCE OF SOULISH BELIEVERS

THE LIFE OF SOULISH BELIEVERS

The soul varies inevitably from person to person. It can not be stereotyped. Each of us has his particular individuality - a uniqueness which will extend on into eternity. It is not destroyed at our regeneration. Otherwise, in the eternity to come life will be most colourless indeed! Now since there is this variation in the souls of all men, it naturally follows that the life of soulish believers will likewise vary from person to person. Consequently, we can speak here, only in general terms and shall merely present the more prominent features, against which God's children may then compare their experiences.

Soulsh believers are inordinately curious For example, simply for the sake of knowing what the future holds do they try to satisfy their curiosity by studying thoroughly the prophecies of the Bible.

Carnal Christians tend to show off their differences and superiorities in clothing, speech or deeds. They desire to shock people into a recognition of all their undertakings. Of course such a tendency may have been theirs before conversion; but they find it hard ever afterwards to overcome this natural propensity.

Unlike spiritual Christians, who seek not so much the explanation as the experience of being one with God, these believers look diligently for an understanding in their mind. They like to argue and to reason. Failure of their life experience to catch up with their ideal is not what worries them; it is their inability to *understand* this lack of spiritual experience which troubles them! They conjecture that knowing mentally is possessing experientially. This is a tremendous deception.

Most soulsh believers assume an attitude of self-righteousness, though often it is scarcely detectable. They hold tenaciously to their minute opinions. It is doubtless correct to hold fast the basic and essential doctrines of the Bible, but certainly we can afford to grant others latitude on minor points. We may have the conviction that what we believe is absolutely right, yet for us to swallow a camel but also to strain out a gnat is not at all pleasing to the Lord. We ought to lay aside the small differences and pursue the common objective.

At times the mind of soulsh Christians is assaulted by the evil spirit; hence their thinking becomes confused, mixed, and sometimes defiled. In their conversations they frequently answer what is not asked: their mind runs wild: they shift their topics of discussion ever so often, proving how scattered are their thoughts. Even when they pray and read the Bible their mind wanders far away. Although these Christians usually act without so much as exercising a single thought about it beforehand, they can tell others how they always act on principle and how carefully they consider every action, even citing some analogous incidents from their lives to corroborate their claims. Oddly enough, they occasionally do take an action after thinking thrice or even ten times. Their actions are truly unpredictable.

Carnal believers are moved easily. On one occasion they may be extremely excited and happy, on another occasion, very despondent and sad. In the happy moment they judge the world too small to contain them, and so they soar on wings to the heavens; but in the moment of sadness they conclude that the world has had enough of them and will be glad to be rid of them. There are times of excitement when their hearts are stirred as though a fire were burning within or a treasure had suddenly been found. Equally are there times of depression when the heart is not so stirred but rather gives way to a feeling of loss, making them most dejected. Their joy and their sorrow alike turn largely upon feeling. Their lives are susceptible to constant changes for they are governed by their emotions.

Over-sensitivity is another trait which generally marks the soulish. Very difficult are they to live with because they interpret every move around them as aimed at them. When neglected they become angry. When they suspect changing attitudes towards them, they are hurt. They easily become intimate with people, for they literally thrive on such affection. They exhibit the sentiment of inseparability. A slight change in such a relationship will give their soul unutterable pains. And thus these people are deceived into thinking they are suffering for the Lord.

God is cognisant of the weakness of the soulish when they make self their centre and consider themselves special upon achieving a little progress in the spiritual realm. He accords them special gifts and supernatural experiences which enable them to enjoy times of such overwhelming bliss as well as times of such closeness to the Lord as though actually to have seen and touched Him. But He uses these special graces to humble them and bring them to the God of all grace. Unfortunately believers do not follow God's intent. Rather than glorifying God and drawing closer to Him, they grasp God's grace for their own boasting. They now regard themselves stronger than others; for, they privately imagine, who can be more spiritual than those who have had such encounters? Moreover, soulish believers have numerous sentimental experiences which induce them to deem themselves more spiritual, not realising these are but evidences of their being carnal. Not by feeling but by faith do the spiritual live.

Often times a carnal Christian is troubled by outside matters. Persons or affairs or things in the world around readily invade his inward man and disturb the peace in his spirit. Place a soulish one in a joyful surrounding and joyful he will be. Put him in a sorrowful environment and sorrowful will he be. He lacks creative power. Instead, he takes on the complexion peculiar to that with which or whom he may be associated.

Those who are soulish usually thrive on sensation. The Lord affords them the sense of His presence before they attain spirituality. They treat such a sensation as their supreme joy. When granted such a feeling, they picture themselves as making huge strides towards the peak of spiritual maturity. Yet the Lord alternately bestows and withdraws this touch that He might gradually train them to be weaned from sensation and walk by faith. These do not understand the way of the Lord, however, and conclude that their spiritual condition is highest when they can feel the Lord's presence and lowest when they fail to do so.

Carnal believers bear a common stamp - talkativeness. Few should be their words, they know, but they are goaded into endless discussion by their excited emotion. They lack self-control in speech; once their mouth is open. their mind seems to lose all control.

Words pour forth like an avalanche. Now the soulish Christian realises he should not be long-winded, but somehow he is unable to withdraw once the conversation gains momentum. Then thoughts of all kinds swiftly invade the conversation, precipitating a continual shift in topic and an unfailing replenishment in words. And “when words are many, transgression is not lacking” says Proverbs 10:19. For the result will be either the loss of control through much speaking, the loss of peace through argument, or even the loss of love through criticism because secretly and hypocritically they will judge others who are loquacious and deem it most unbecoming in them. Fully aware that flippancy does not become the saint, the carnal person still loves to talk frivolously and bankers to speak and to hear coarse jests. Or he may go in for vivacious and gay conversations which he simply can not afford to miss, no matter what. Although at times he does abhor such impious or unprofitable talk, it is not for long; for when the emotion is stirred once again he automatically returns to his favourite old pastime.

Soulsh believers also indulge in “the lust of the eyes.” What often governs their attitudes is the particular artistic or aesthetic view momentarily current in the world. They have not yet assumed a death attitude to human artistic concepts. Instead they pride themselves on possessing the insight of an artist. Now should they not be ardent admirers of art they may swing to the other extreme of being indifferent to beauty altogether. These will clothe themselves in rags as a token of their suffering with the Lord.

The intellectuals among those who live by the soul tend to view themselves as “Bohemians.” On a windy morning or a moonlit night, for example, they are apt to be found pouring out their souls in sentimental songs. They frequently bemoan their lives, shedding many tears of self-pity. These individuals love literature and are simply ravished by its beauty. They also enjoy humming a few lyric poems, for this gives them a transcendent feeling. They visit mountains, lakes and streams since these bring them closer to nature. Upon seeing the declining course of this world they begin to entertain thoughts of leading a detached existence. How ascendant, how pure they are! Not like other believers who seem to be so materialistic, so pedestrian, so enmeshed. These Christians deem themselves most spiritual, not recognising how incredibly soulsh they actually are. Such carnality presents the greatest obstacle to their entering a wholly spiritual realm because they are governed so completely by their emotion. Of greatest hazard to them are an unawareness of their dangerous position and an utter self-content.

Carnal believers may be long on so-called spiritual knowledge but usually are short on experience. Hence they condemn others but do not correct themselves. When they bear the teaching of the dividing of soul and spirit their natural minds smoothly assimilate it. But what happens then? They set about discerning and dissecting the soulsh thoughts and acts not in their own lives but in those of others. Their acquisition of knowledge has merely propelled them to judge someone else and not to help themselves. This propensity to criticise is a common practice among the soulsh. They have the soulsh capacity to receive knowledge but lack the spiritual capacity to be humble. In their association with people they leave one with the impression of being cold and hard. Their dealing with others possesses a certain stiffness about it. Unlike spiritual believers their outward man has not been broken and they are therefore not easy to approach or to accompany.

Christians who thrive on the soul life are very proud. This is because they make self the centre. However much they may try to give the glory to God and acknowledge any merit as of God's grace, carnal believers have their mind set upon self. Whether accounting their lives good or bad their thoughts revolve around themselves. They have not yet lost themselves in God. These feel greatly hurt if they are laid aside either in work or in the judgment of others. They can not bear to be misunderstood or criticised because they unlike their more spiritual brethren - still have not learned to accept gladly God's orderings, whether resulting in uplift or in rejection. Unwilling are they to appear inferior, as being despised. Even after they have received grace to know the actual state of their natural life as most corrupt and even after they may have humbled themselves before God - counting their lives to be the worst in the world, these nevertheless ironically end up regarding themselves more humble than the rest. They boast in their humility! Pride is deeply bred in the bone.

THE WORKS OF SOULISH BELIEVERS

The soulish are second to none in the matter of works. They are most active, zealous and willing. But they do not labour because they have received God's order; they labour instead because they have zeal and capacity so to do. They believe doing God's work is good enough, unaware that only doing the labour of God's appointment is truly commendable. These individuals have neither the heart to trust nor the time to wait. They never sincerely seek the will of God. On the contrary, they labour according to their ideas, with a mind teeming with schemes and plans. Because they diligently work, these Christians fall into the error of looking upon themselves as far more advanced than their leisurely brethren. Who can deny, however, that with God's grace the latter can easily be more spiritual than the former?

The labour of soulish believers chiefly depends upon feeling. They take to work only when they feel up to it; and if these congenial feelings cease while working they will quit automatically. They can witness to people for hours on end without weariness if they experience within their hearts a burning and unspeakably joyful feeling. But if they sustain a coldness or dryness within they will scarcely speak, or not even speak at all, in the face of the greatest need - as, say, before a death bed situation. With tingling warmth they can run a thousand miles; without it, they will not move a tiny step. They can not ignore their feelings to the extent of speaking when stomach is empty to a Samaritan woman or talking while eyes are drowsy to a Nicodemus.

Carnal Christians crave works; yet amid many labours they are unable to maintain calm in their spirit. They can not fulfil God's orders quietly as can the spiritual believers. Much work disturbs them. Outer confusion causes inner unrest. Their hearts are governed by outward matters. Being "distracted with much serving" (Luke 10:40) is the characteristic of the work of any soulish believer.

Carnal Christians are readily discouraged in their exertions. They lack that quiet confidence which trusts God for His work. Regulated as they are by their internal sensations and external environments, they can not appreciate the "law of faith." Upon feeling that they have failed, though not necessarily true, they give up. They faint when the surroundings appear dark and uninviting to them. They have not yet entered into the rest of God.

Lacking in far-sightedness, believers who trust in the soul easily become discouraged. Only what is immediately ahead can they see. Momentary victory begets them joy, temporary defeat renders them sad. They have not discovered how to see on to the end of a matter through the eyes of faith. They yearn for an immediate success as comfort for their heart; failure to achieve it renders them unable to press on unwarily and to trust God in continued darkness.

The soulish are experts at finding fault, although they are not necessarily stronger themselves. Quick are the soulish to criticise and slow are they to forgive. When they investigate and correct the shortcomings in others they exude a kind of self-sufficient and superior attitude. Their way in sometimes helping people is correct and legal, but their motivation is not always right.

The tendency to be hasty often stamps those who follow their souls. They can not wait on God. Whatever is done is done hurriedly, precipitously, impetuously. They act from impulse rather than from principle. Even in God's work, these Christians are so propelled by their zeal and passion that they simply can not stay for God to make clear His will and way.

The mind of the carnal is occupied wholly with their endeavours. They ponder and plan, plot and predict. At times they presage a bright future, hence are beside themselves with joy; at other moments they fore-glimpse darkness and immediately become haunted by untold misery. Do they thereby think of their Lord? No, they think more of their labours. To them, working for the Lord is of supreme importance, but often they forget the Lord Who gives work. The Lord's *work* becomes the centre, the *Lord* of work recedes to the background.

Soulsh persons, lacking in spiritual insights, are guided by sudden thoughts which flash through the mind; their words and works are therefore often inappropriate. They speak, in the first place, not because need summons them to do so but solely because they surmise there ought to be such a need. And then, they may reproach when sympathy is called for or comfort when warning is in order. All these are due to their deficiency in spiritual discernment. They place too much reliance upon their limited and limiting thoughts. And even after their words have proved to be unprofitable, they still refuse to accept the verdict.

Because he possesses oceans of plans and mountains of opinions it is extremely trying to work with a carnal Christian. Whatever he deems to be good must be accepted as good by others. The essential condition for working with him is perfect agreement to *his* ideas or interpretations. The slightest interpretation is equated as a deep involvement in what he considers to be the faith once delivered to the saints. Any different opinion which is manifested he positively can not tolerate. Although the soulsh believer knows he should not *hold on to* opinions, he makes sure that whenever an opinion needs to die it is certainly not going to be his! Sectarianism, he will admit, is unscriptural; but it is never *his* particular sect which must die. Whatever such a believer does not accept he labels as heresy. (Is it any wonder that other Christians - soulsh like himself - respond in kind by denying the authenticity of his faith?) He is deeply attached to his work: He loves his own small, so-called inner circle and is thus incapable of labouring together with other children of God. And he insists on denominating God's children according to his own affiliation.

When it comes to preaching, the soulish can not rely entirely on God. They either repose their confidence in some good illustrative stories and witty words or in their personalities. Perhaps a few notable preachers can even completely rely upon themselves: because I have said it, people are bound to listen! They may depend on God, but they likewise depend on self. Hence all their careful preparations. They expend more time in analysing, in collecting materials, and in hard thinking than on prayer, on seeking God's mind, and on waiting for the power from above. They memorise their messages and then deliver, them verbatim. *Their* thoughts occupy a primary place in such work. With such an approach as this these believers will naturally put more confidence in the message than in the Lord. Instead of trusting the Holy Spirit to reveal man's need and God's supply to their listeners, they depend exclusively upon the words they deliver to move human hearts. What these carnal believers stress and trust are but their own words. Perhaps their speech does convey truth, but without the quickening of the Holy Spirit even truth is of small advantage. There shall be very little spiritual fruit should anyone lean on words rather than on the Holy Spirit. However much these articulations are acclaimed, they only reach people's minds, not their hearts.

Soulish believers relish using high-sounding spectacular words and phrases. At least in this respect they are trying to imitate the genuinely spiritual ones who, having been given so much experience, are able to teach with a distinctiveness of which none of their predecessors may ever have conceived. The carnal consider this highly attractive, hence their delight in employing wonderful imaginations in preaching. Whenever a masterful idea comes upon them - while walking, conversing, eating, or sleeping - they will jot it down for future use. They never question whether such idea is revealed in their spirit by the Holy Spirit or is merely a sudden thought which burst upon their mind.

Some Christians who are indeed soulish find special delight in helping others. Since they have not yet reached maturity, they do not know how to give food at the proper time. This does not mean these do not have knowledge; actually they have too much. Upon discovering any improper element or when told of some difficulty, they immediately assume the role of senior believer, eager to help with what limited insight they have. They pour forth scriptural teachings and experiences of saints in lavish abundance. They are inclined to tell all they know, nay, perhaps more than they know, now reaching out into the realm of supposition. These "senior" believers exhibit one after another everything which has been stored in their minds, without at all inquiring whether those to whom they speak really have such a need or can absorb so much teaching in one session. They are like Hezekiah who opened all his storehouses and showed off all his treasures. Sometimes without any outside stimulus but just because they are stirred by an inner emotion, they will shower others with spiritual teachings, many of which are mere theories. They wish to display their knowledge.

The above characteristic is not true, however, of all soulish children of God. It varies with different personalities. Some will keep quiet, uttering not so much as a syllable. Even in the face of desperate need, when they ought to speak, they will clamp their mouths shut. They have not yet attained freedom from natural shyness and fear. They may sit next to those talkative believers and criticise them in heart, but their silence does not make them any less soulish.

Because they are not rooted in God and have not therefore learned how to be bidden in Him, carnal people long to be seen. They seek prominent position in spiritual work. If they attend meetings they expect to be heard, not to hear. They experience unspeakable joy whenever recognised and respected.

The soulish love to use spiritual phraseology. They learn by heart a large spiritual vocabulary which they invariably employ whenever convenient. They use it in preaching as well as in praying, but without any heart.

A vaunting ambition marks out those who live in the realm of the soul. The first place is often their desire. They are vainglorious in the Lord's work. They aspire to be powerful workers, greatly used by the Lord. Why? That they may gain a place, obtain some glory. They like to compare themselves with others: probably not so much with those whom they do not know as with those with whom they work. Such contending and striving in the dark can be very intense. Those who are spiritually behind they despise, regarding them as too laggard; those who are spiritually great they downgrade, visualising themselves as almost equal. Their unceasing pursuit is to be great, to be the head. They hope their work will prosper so that they may be well spoken of. These desires of course are deeply concealed in their hearts, barely detectable by others. Although these longings may indeed be well - nigh hidden and mingled with other and purer motives, the presence of such base desires is nonetheless an irrefutable fact.

The soulish are terribly self-satisfied. Should the Lord use them to save one soul they will explode with joy and consider themselves spiritually successful. They take pride in themselves if they succeed but once. A little knowledge, a little experience, a little success easily provokes them to feel as though they have achieved a great deal. This common trait among soulish believers can be likened to a small vessel easily filled. They do not observe how vast and deep is the ocean of water which remains. So long as their bucket is brimming they are satisfied. They have not been lost in God, else they would be able to take in their stride all things as nothing. Their eyes focus upon their petty selves and hence they are greatly affected by a simple little gain or loss. Such limited capacity is the reason why God can not use them more. If such boasting erupts upon winning only ten souls to the Lord, what will happen should a thousand souls be saved?

After they have experienced some success in preaching, one thought lingers with soulish believers: they were truly wonderful! They derive great joy in dwelling upon their superiority. How distinct they are from others, even "greater than the greatest apostle." Now sometimes they are hurt in heart if others have not thus esteemed them. They bemoan the blindness of those who do not recognise that a prophet from Nazareth is here. At times when these soulish believers think their messages contain thoughts which no one has discovered before, they become troubled should the audience fail to appreciate the marvel of it. Following each success they will spend a few hours, if not a day or two, in self-congratulation. Under such deceit, it is no wonder that they often come to assume that the church of God shall soon see a great evangelist, revivalist or writer in them. What anguish for them it must be if people fail to take notice!

Carnal believers are those without principles. Their words and deeds do not follow fixed maxims. They live instead according to their emotion and mind. They act as they feel or think, sometimes quite contrary to their usual pattern. This change can be seen most vividly after preaching. They change to what they recently have preached. If for instance they speak on patience, then for a day or two afterwards they are unusually patient. If they exhort people to praise God, then they will begin to praise and praise. This will not last long, however. Since they act according to feeling, their own words will activate their emotion into behaving in such and such a way. But once the emotion has passed, all is over and done with.

Another special point concerning soulish Christians is that they are uncommonly gifted. Believers bound by sin are not so talented; neither are the spiritual ones. It seems that God bestows abundant gifts upon the soulish in order that they may deliver their gifts to death voluntarily and then reclaim them renewed and glorified in resurrection. Yet such saints of God are loathe to consign these gifts to death and instead try to use them to the maximum. God-given abilities ought to be used by God for His glory, but carnal believers often regard these as theirs. So long as they serve God in this frame of mind they will continue to use them in accordance with their ideas without letting the Holy Spirit lead them. And when successful they render all glory to themselves. Naturally such self-glorification and self-admiration are quite veiled; nevertheless, however much they may try to humble themselves and to offer glory to God, they can not avoid being), self-centred. Glory be to God, yes: but be it unto God and to me!

Because the carnal are greatly talented - active in thought, rich in emotion - they readily arouse people's interest and stir the latter's hearts. Consequently, soulish Christians usually possess magnetic personalities. They can quickly win the acclamation of the common people. Yet the fact remains that they actually are lacking in spiritual power. They do not contain the living flow of the power of the Holy Spirit. What they have is of their own. People are aware that they possess something, but this something does not impart spiritual vitality to others. They appear to be quite rich; they are really quite poor.

In conclusion. A believer may have any one or all of the aforementioned experiences before he is delivered entirely from the yoke of sin. The Bible and actual experience together substantiate the fact that many believers simultaneously are controlled on the one hand by their body unto sin and influenced on the other by their soul to live according to themselves. In the Bible both are labelled as being "of the flesh." Sometimes in their lives Christians follow the sin of the body and sometimes the self-will of the soul. Now if one can encounter many of the delights of the soul while attendantly indulging no lesser amount of the lusts of the body, is it not equally possible for him as well to have great soulish sensations in association with many experiences of the spirit? (Of course it should not be overlooked that there are some who conclude one phase before entering upon other phases.) A believer's experience is consequently a rather complex matter. It is imperative that we determine for ourselves whether we have been delivered from the base and the ignoble. Having spiritual experiences does not render us spiritual. Only after we have been delivered from both sin *and* self can we ever be accounted spiritual.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DANGERS OF SOULISH LIFE

THE MANIFESTATIONS OF SOUL LIFE

The manifestations of soul life can be separated generally into four divisions: natural strength; self-conceit, hard and unyielding towards God; self-styled wisdom with many opinions and plans; and emotional sensation sought in spiritual experiences. These are due to the fact that the life of the soul is self, which in turn is natural strength, and that the faculties of the soul are will, mind and emotion. Because there are these various faculties in the soul, the experiences of many soulish Christians are bound to be extremely unlike. Some incline more to the mind while others to emotion or will. Although their lives are therefore greatly dissimilar, all nonetheless are soulish lives. Those who turn to the mind may be able to discern the carnality in those who fall under emotion, and vice versa. Both, however, belong to the soul. What is absolutely vital for believers to see is that they must have their true condition exposed by God's light so that they themselves may be liberated by the truth instead of their measuring others with new knowledge. Had God's children been willing to use His light for self-enlightenment their spiritual state would not be so low today.

The most prominent indication of being soulish is a mental search, acceptance and propagation of the truth. For Christians of this type the highest spiritual experience and the profoundest truth serve but to cultivate their minds. This does not necessarily mean that one's spiritual walk is not in any manner affected in a positive way; but it certainly denotes that the prime motive is to gratify the mind. While believers who are mastered by the mental faculty do indeed have a great appetite for spiritual matters, yet for the satisfaction of this hunger they depend more upon their thoughts than upon God's revelation. They consume more time and energy in calculating than in praying.

Emotion is what believers mistake most for spirituality. Carnal Christians whose tendency is emotional in character habitually crave sensation in their lives. They desire to sense the presence of God in their hearts or their sensory organs; they yearn to feel a love-fire burning. They want to feel elated, to be uplifted in spiritual life, to be prosperous in work. True, spiritual believers sometimes do have such sensations, yet their progress and joy are not contingent upon these. The soulish are quite different in this respect: with such sensations, they can serve the Lord; without them, they can scarcely move a step.

A very common expression of a soulish walk manifests itself in the will - that power of self-assertion. Through it believers who live in the soul make self the centre of every thought, word and action. They want to know for *their* satisfaction, feel for *their* enjoyment, labour according to *their* plan. The hub of their life is self and the ultimate aim is to glorify themselves.

Previously we learned that the term "soul" in the Bible is translated also as "living creature" or "animal." It simply connotes "the animal life." This should help to indicate to us how soul power expresses itself. The most appropriate phrase which can be selected to describe the life and work of soulish believers is "animal activities" or "animal aliveness": much planning, numerous activities, confused thinking, and mixed

emotions: the whole being, both within and without, in agitation and turmoil. When emotion is activated the rest of the being naturally follows suit. But if emotion is depressed or sensation has cooled somewhat, the mind will remain excited in its own right. The walk of a carnal Christian is characterised by perpetual movement - if not physical activity, then mental or emotional liveliness. Such a walk is bristling with “animal aliveness”; it is far from communicating the life of the spirit.

We may summarise by saying that the tendency of the fallen soul is to set believers to walking by their natural power, to serve God with their strength and according to their ideas, to covet physical sensation in knowing the Lord or experiencing the Lord’s presence, and to understand the Word of God by the power of their minds.

Unless a Christian has received from God a view of his natural self, he unquestionably shall serve God in the energy of his created life. This inflicts great damage upon his spiritual life and results in his bearing little if any true spiritual fruit. Believers must be shown by the Holy Spirit the shamefulness of performing spiritual work with creaturely power just as we consider it disgraceful for an ambitious child to flatter himself, so similarly God regards our “animal activity” in spiritual service to be a disgrace. May we be rich in the experience of repenting in dust and ashes instead of striving for the first place before men.

THE FOLLY OF BELIEVERS

Countless saints are blind to the harmfulness inherent in soulish experience. They consider it right to resist and reject those obviously sinful deeds of the flesh because these defile the spirit, but at the same time are they not justified in walking by the energy of the soul which they share in common with all men and animals? What wrong is there for we men to live by our natural power provided we do not sin? As long as the teaching of the Bible concerning, soul life does not touch their hearts they will be unable to see any reason for denying that life. If for instance they should transgress God’s law and offend Him, they definitely know this is wrong; but if these same believers try their best to do good and to inspire their inborn virtue, how, they ask, can there be any objection? In performing God’s work they may neither do it zealously nor depend upon His strength, but at least, they will argue, what we do is God’s work! Perhaps many of these endeavours are not appointed by God; nevertheless, those activities are not sinful, claim these believers, but rather most excellent! What offense can that kind of work be? Since God has bestowed gifts and talents in abundance, why can we not work with them? Are we not to engage our talents? If we are not talented we can do nothing; if talented, we should employ them at every opportunity!

Their reasoning continues in another vein: we of course would be wrong to neglect God’s Word, but can it now be wrong for us to search out diligently with our mind the meaning of the Scriptures? Can there be sin in reading the Bible? There are many truths of which we presently are ignorant; how unreasonably long we would have to wait to understand them if we did not use our brains! Is not our mind created by God for us to use? Since we are doing it for God and not for sinful ends why can we not use our mind to plan and plot God’s work?

They go one step further. Our seeking for the consciousness of God’s presence, they will insist, arises from an honest and sincere heart. When we feel dry and low in our life

and labour is it not true that God frequently uplifts us by making us so aware of the love of the Lord Jesus as though He had set aglow a fire in our hearts and by giving us such joy and such a sense of His presence that we can almost touch Him? Can anyone deny this as the summit of spirituality? Why, then, judge it wrong if we earnestly seek and pray for the restoration of such feeling after it has been lost and our life has become cold and common?

These musings are just what numerous saints do turn over in their hearts. They do not distinguish the spiritual from the soulical. They have not yet received that personal revelation of the Holy Spirit which shows them the evil of their natural walk. They must be willing to wait upon God for instruction, petitioning the Holy Spirit for revelation as to the sundry evils of their natural good life. This needs to be done in honesty and humility, accompanied by a readiness to forsake everything which the Holy Spirit may uncover. At the appropriate time He will point out to them the utter corruption of their natural life.

The Holy Spirit will equip them to realise that all their work and walk are centred upon self and not upon the Lord. Their good deeds are done not only by their own efforts but primarily for their own glory as well. They have not sought God's will in their exertions. They are not disposed to obey God nor to undertake every matter according to His guidance and through His strength. They simply do what and as they feel like doing. All their prayers and striving after God's will are purely outward shows; they are utterly false. Though these believers use God-endowed talents, they nevertheless think only of how gifted they are, forgetting entirely the Giver of these gifts. They eagerly admire the Word of the Lord but seek knowledge only to satisfy the aspiration of their mind; they are reluctant to wait upon God for His revelation in due course. Their quest for the presence of God, for the consciousness of His mercy and nearness, is not for God's sake but for their happiness. By so doing they are not loving the Lord; rather, they are loving the feeling which refreshes them and affords them the glory of the third heaven. Their total life and labour elevate self as the centre. They wish to enjoy themselves.

God's children are awakened to the folly of holding fast their soul life only after they have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit as to the abhorrent character of that life. Such enlightenment does not arrive all at once; it proceeds gradually; not once for all but on many occasions. When believers are illumined by the Spirit for the first time they repent beneath the Light and voluntarily deliver their self life to death. But human hearts are exceedingly deceitful. After a while, perhaps but a few days later, self-confidence, self-love and self-pleasure are reinstated. Hence, periodic illumination must continue so that believers may be willing to deny their natural life. What is truly distressing is to find few believers so possessed of the Lord's mind that they are amenable to yielding voluntarily to Him in these matters. Multiplied defeats and no less shame are always required to render believers willing and ready to forsake their natural propensities. How imperfect is our willingness and how fickle is our condition!

Christians ought to eliminate their folly. They ought to adopt God's view of the absolute impossibility for their natural walk to please Him. They must dare to allow the Holy Spirit to point out to them every corruption of the soul life. They must exercise faith in believing God's estimation of their natural life and must wait patiently for the

Holy Spirit to reveal in them what the Bible says of them. Only in this manner will they be led in the way of deliverance.

THE DANGERS OF BEING SOULISH

Believers who are reluctant to, or who fail to, attain what God has ordained are subject to certain hazards. God's intent is for His children to walk by the spirit, not by the soul or body. Failure to live in the spirit incurs loss. Its dangers are at least threefold.

1. The danger of the spirit being suppressed. The perfect and complete order of God's operation is first to move in the human spirit, next to enlighten the mind of the soul, and finally to execute through the body. Such an arrangement is of vital significance.

Having been born again of the Holy Spirit, believers ought now to live by their spirit. Only so shall they be qualified to ascertain the will of God and to co-operate with His Spirit in overcoming every wile of the enemy. The believer's spirit ought to be very much alive to the movement of the Holy Spirit so as not to quench His movement but follow it in order that He may execute His purpose through the human spirit. God's Spirit needs the co-operation of the human spirit to lead believers into triumph in their daily walk and to prepare them for the good works appointed them by God. (We shall touch on this aspect of the spirit subsequently.)

Many of God's children, however, do not perceive the movement of the Holy Spirit. They can not distinguish between the spiritual and the soulical. They often construe the soulical to be the spiritual and vice versa, consequently drawing much upon the energy of the soul for their walk and work to the detrimental suppression of the spirit. They assume they are walking according to the spirit while in truth they are walking according to the soul. Such foolishness throttles their spirit from co-operating with God's Spirit and thereby interrupts what He is wishing to do in their lives.

As long as Christians dwell in the soul they move according to the thoughts, imaginations, plans and visions of their mind. They covet joyful sensations and are mastered by their feelings. When they have sensuous experiences they are elated, but when bereft of such experiences they can hardly lift a finger. They are therefore powerless to live in the realm of the spirit. Their feelings become their life, and as their feelings change so do they too. This amounts to nothing more than walking after the sensations of their outward soul and body instead of living out from the centre of their being which is the spirit. Their spiritual sensitivity, overpowered by the body and the soul, grows dull. These believers can only sense matters in the soul or in the body; they have lost the spiritual sense. Their spirit is disabled from co-operating with God and their spiritual growth is arrested. They are no longer capable of acquiring power and guidance in their spirit for warfare and worship. If a person denies to his spirit complete ascendancy over his being or fails to draw upon its power to live, he shall never mature. Spiritual sense is most delicate. It is not easy to recognise even for those who have learned to know and follow it. How much more difficult will it be to discern spiritual awareness if it is subject to constant disturbance from rough soulical sensation emanating from the outside! Not only can soulical sensation confuse, it can also suppress, spiritual sense.

2. *The danger of retreating into the body realm.* Many fleshly works enumerated in Galatians 5 naturally have their origin in the lusts of the human body, but quite a few others indicate as well the activities of the soul. “Selfishness, dissension, party spirit” distinctly flow from man’s self or personality. They are the consequence of the numerous diverse thoughts and opinions held on to among saints. What is important to note here is the fact that these exertions of the soul are listed together with such sins of the body as “immorality, impurity, licentiousness, drunkenness, carousing.” This ought to remind us of how closely entwined are the soul and the body. These two in reality are inseparable, because the body we are now in is a “soulical body” (1 Corinthians 15:44 literal). Should a believer therefore merely seek to subdue his sinful nature and not his natural life too, he shall find himself after a short period of experiencing victory over sin, once again tumbling into the realm of the body of sin. Though he may not return to those uglier forms of sin, nevertheless he remains bound by sin.

We should understand that the cross is where God handles the “old creation.” There is no partial dealing with the old creation at the cross, for the latter deals with it in its totality. Hence we can not approach the cross and claim only salvation by substitution without also accepting deliverance through identification. Once receiving by faith the Lord as personal Saviour, we shall be led by the indwelling Holy Spirit to desire the experience of co-death with Christ, regardless how much or how little we comprehend identification. Although we shall not lose our new life, we shall fail to enjoy the blessing of it, even the joy of salvation, if we persistently resist the inner desire for the new life. The cross never stops short of its outworking. Deeper and deeper will it operate in us until the old creation is completely crucified experientially. Its goal is the total setting aside of everything belonging to Adam.

Now should God’s children, upon experiencing victory over sin, neglect to proceed to overcome the natural life by continuing to dwell in the realm of the soul, they shall discover the soul and body gradually being reunited and leading them back into the sins which once they had forsaken. It can be likened to sailing against the current: lack of advance means sure drift backward. Whatever has been done shall soon be undone if the cross fails to work thoroughly in us. This may explain why many fall back into their old state after having experienced triumph over sin for a while. Should the old creation’s life (that of the soul) be allowed to continue, that life will rapidly reunite with the old creation’s nature (sin).

3. *The danger of the power of darkness taking advantage.* The Letter of James, written to believers, distinctly delineates the relation between soul life and satanic work:

“Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good life let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This wisdom is not such as comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual (literally “soulish”), devilish.” (James 3:13-15)

There is a wisdom which comes from Satan and it is the same as that which can arise at times out of the human soul. The “flesh” is the devil’s factory; his operation in the soulical part of the flesh is as active as in the bodily part. These verses explain how bitter jealousy springs from the seeking of sourish wisdom. It is through the activity of the devil in the human soul. Christians are aware that the adversary can entice people

to sin, but do they equally realise he can inject thoughts into man's mind? The fall of man was due to the love of knowledge and of wisdom. Satan is employing the same tactic today in order to retain the believer's soul as his operative centre.

The scheme of Satan is to preserve for himself as much of our old creation as possible. If he fails to entangle believers in sin, he will next try to induce them to keep their natural life by taking advantage of their ignorance of his wiles or their unwillingness to yield to the Spirit. For if he does not succeed, all the armies of hell shall soon be totally unemployed. The more believers unite with the Lord in spirit the more the life of the Holy Spirit shall flow into their spirit and the more the cross shall work in them daily. Hence they shall be delivered increasingly from the old creation and shall yield less ground to Satan from which to operate. Let it be known that all the endeavours of Satan, whether by enticement or by attack, are perpetrated in our old creation. He dare not waste his energy on our "new creation," God's Own life. That is the reason he unceasingly attempts to persuade the children of God to retain something of the old creation - be it sin or the beautiful natural life - so that he may continue to operate. How he conspires against believers and confuses them into loving their self life, despite the fact they have hated sin.

While we Christians were yet sinners we "once lived in the passions of our flesh (referring to sins which are related particularly to the body), following the desires of body and mind (referring to soul life)" (Ephesians 2:3). The preceding verse informs us that both are being wrought upon by the evil spirit. Now our aim in discussing this is to assist God's children to understand that the body is not the only sphere of Satan's pernicious operation, but that the soul too is the preserve of the adversary. We wish to reiterate that believers must be released not only from sin but also from their natural realm. May the Holy Spirit open our eyes to see the gravity of such a step. Were saints able to be liberated step by step from the life of the soul as well as the power of sin, Satan would meet with great defeat on all sides.

Because believers, carnal as they are, do not know how to guard their minds, evil spirits can easily utilise man's natural wisdom towards the realisation of their plot. They can smoothly and subtly introduce misunderstanding and prejudice in man's mind so as to raise questions touching God's truth and doubts as to the truthfulness of others. How extensive the obsessed mind has obstructed the working of the Holy Spirit in man is beyond telling. Although one may have a good intention, his will is betrayed by his obsessed mind. Beautiful ideals, too, hinder the Holy Spirit's action just as does human foolishness. The evil spirits can even impart visions or lofty thoughts to believers, lulling them into thinking that since these are supernatural they must be of God. And so the saint slips into deeper and deeper deception. Before the self life is delivered to death the believers mind is bound to be curious, desiring to search out, to grasp, to possess: all of which furnishes opportunity to the evil spirits.

The emotional part of the soul also can be aroused easily by the adversary. Since many believers crave joyful feelings and the sensations of having the Holy Spirit, of the loveliness of the Lord Jesus, and of the presence of God, evil spirits will supply their senses with many strange experiences. This is that their natural abilities might be stimulated and that the still small voice of the Holy Spirit, traceable only by man's

delicate intuitive faculty in his spirit, might be suppressed. God willing, later we shall discuss these problems in detail.

Christians shall incur great loss in spiritual warfare if they have not dealt with their self. Revelation 12:11 enunciates one of the vital conditions in overcoming the devil - namely, God's people must not love their soul life even to the point of death. Unless self-love or self-pity is committed to the cross they shall surely be defeated by the adversary. Soldiers of Christ who love their lives shall forfeit the victory. The adversary shall conquer everyone whose heart is filled with self-consideration.

Any attachment to things reveals weakness to the enemy. The sole possibility of overcoming him is to yield the natural life to death. Satan can operate through undisciplined souls; he also can directly attack those who know nothing of the cross. Our soul life constitutes the adversary's fifth column within us. It gives ground to the enemy. Regardless how much we know the truth and earnestly contend for it, the soul is forever our vulnerable spot. What is painfully disturbing is the fact that to the degree believers become spiritual to that degree does their soulish life become difficult to detect! The lesser the soulish element, the tougher to treat it. There may be the merest speck of carnality mixed in with the spiritual life, but just this makes it extremely troublesome to distinguish between what is soulish and what is spiritual. Unless Christians are keenly alert in resisting the devil, they shall encounter great defeat through their self life.

That the Christian's soul life could be deceived and could be used by the devil is indeed beyond common expectation. The alarm must therefore be sounded. It is God's desire that we deny everything we inherit from Adam, even our life and nature. Disobedience to God invariably implies danger.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CROSS AND THE SOUL

THE CALL OF THE CROSS

On at least four separate occasions and recorded in the four Gospels the Lord Jesus called His disciples to deny their soul life, deliver it to death, and then to follow Him. The Lord fully recognises that this is the *sine qua non* for any believer who desires to follow Him and to be perfect like Him in serving men and in obeying God. The Lord Jesus mentions soul life in all these calls, yet He places a different emphasis upon each. Since soul life can express itself in various ways, the Lord stresses a different aspect each time. Anyone who would be a disciple of the Lord must give close attention to what He has said. He is summoning men to commit their natural life to the cross.

THE CROSS AND SOULICAL AFFECTION

“He who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his (soul) life will lose it, and he who loses his (soul) life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10:38-39).

These verses beckon us to relinquish our soul life and hand it over to the cross for the Lord’s sake. The Lord Jesus explains how a man’s foes shall be those of his household; how the son, for the sake of the Lord, shall be torn away from his father, the daughter from her mother, the daughter-in-law from her mother-in-law. This constitutes a cross and the cross denotes being crucified. It is our natural inclination to cherish our beloved ones. We are happy to listen to them and willing to respond to their bidding. But the Lord Jesus calls us to not rebel against God because of our beloved ones. When the desire of God and the desire of man are in conflict, we must for the Lord’s sake take up our cross by committing our soul life to death, even though the person we love is dear to us, and even though under ordinary circumstances we would be most reluctant to hurt him. The Lord Jesus beckons us in this way so that we may be purified from our natural love. It is for this reason that He therefore declares that the one “who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37).

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he can not be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, can not be my disciple” (Luke 14:26-27). Now Matthew shows us in the matter of affection how believers ought to choose loving the Lord first rather than one’s family; while Luke signifies what attitude must be maintained towards the love which arises from our soul life - we ought to hate it. Strictly speaking, we are not to love just because the objects of our affection are those whom we would naturally love. Dear and near as parents, brothers, sisters, wives and children are to us, they are listed among the forbidden. Such human love flows from soul life which will cling to its heart desires and will call for love in return. The Lord maintains that such soul life needs to be delivered to death. Though we do not now see Him, He wants us to love Him. He desires us to deny our natural love. He wishes to rid us of our natural love towards others so that we will not love with our own love. Of course He wills that we should love others, but not with our

natural soulical affection. If we love, let it be for the sake of the Lord and not for their sake. A new relationship comes to us in the Lord. We should receive from Him His love so that we may love others. In a word, our love must be governed by the Lord. Should He desire us to, we must love even our enemies: if He does not ask us to, we can not love even the dearest of our household. He does not want our heart to be attached anywhere because He wants us to serve Him freely.

This new love relationship being the case, the soul life must be denied. That is a cross. In so obeying Christ as to disregard his natural affection, a believer's natural love suffers intensely. Such sorrow and pain becomes a practical cross to him. Deep are the heart wounds and many are the tears when one has to forfeit the one he loves. These inflict intense sufferings upon our lives. How very loathe the soul is to yield up its beloved for the Lord's sake! But through this very action is the soul delivered to death; yea, it even becomes willing to die; and thus the believer is liberated from the power of the soul. Upon losing its natural affection on the cross the soul cedes ground to the Holy Spirit that He may shed abroad in the believer's heart the love of God, and enable him to love in God and with the love of God.

Let it be observed that, humanly speaking, this expression of the soul is quite legitimate, for it is most natural and is not defiled as is sin. Is not the love we have mentioned shared by all men? What illegitimacy can there be in loving those of one's family? Hence we know that our Lord is summoning us to overcome the natural, even to denying man's legal right ... for the sake of God. God wants us to love Him more than our Isaac. It is true that this soul life is given by the Creator; nevertheless, He desires us not to be governed by that life principle. People of the world can not understand why; only the believer who is losing himself gradually into the life of God can comprehend its meaning. Who can appreciate God's asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac whom God Himself had first given? Those who apprehend God's heart make no attempt to cling to God-imparted gifts; rather do they desire to rest in God, the Giver of all gifts. God wills for us to be attached to nothing aside from Him, whether it be man or a thing or even something conferred on us by Himself.

Many Christians are quite disposed to leave Ur of the Chaldees, but few there be who can see the need to sacrifice on Mount Moriah what God has given. This is one of the penetrating lessons of faith and relates to our being united with God. He requires His children to forsake everything that they may be wholly His. They must not only rid themselves of whatever they know to be harmful but also yield to the cross whatever is humanly legitimate - such as affection - in order that they may be entirely under the authority of the Holy Spirit.

Our Lord's demand is most meaningful, for is it not true that human affection is tremendously uncontrollable? Without consigning it to the cross and losing it, affection can become a formidable obstacle to spiritual life. Human feelings change as the world changes. Their easy excitement can occasion a saint to lose his spiritual balance. Their constant disturbance can affect a believer's peace in his spirit. Do not sorrows, moanings, sighs and tears usually result from hurt feelings? If the Lord is not pre-eminent in our affections He can hardly be Lord in other respects. This is a test of spirituality and a measure of its degree. We must accordingly hate our soul life and refuse its affections to have free rein. The Lord's demand differs completely from our

natural desire. What was previously loved shall now be hated; and even the organ which generates love, our soul life, must be abhorred as well. Such is the spiritual way. If we verily bear the cross we shall be neither controlled nor influenced by soulical affection but shall be fit to love in the power of the Holy Spirit. Even so did the Lord Jesus love His family while on earth.

THE CROSS AND SELF

“Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it’” (Matthew 16:24-25). Again our Lord is calling His disciples to take up the cross by presenting their soul life to death. Whereas the emphasis in Matthew 10 is the affection of the soul, here in Matthew 16 the self of the soul is brought into view. From the preceding verses we learn that the Lord Jesus was at that time unfolding to His disciples His approaching rendezvous with the cross. Out of his intense love for the Lord Peter blurted out: “Lord, pity Yourself.” Peter was mindful of man, urging his Master to spare Himself from the pains of the cross in the flesh. Peter failed to understand how man ought to be mindful of the things of God, even in such a matter as death on a cross. He failed to see that concern for God’s will must far exceed the concern for self. His attitude went something like this: “Though by dying on the cross one shall obey God’s will and fulfil God’s purpose, yet ought not one to think of himself? Should he not be mindful of the pain he will have to bear? Lord, pity Yourself!”

What was the Lord’s answer to Peter? He sternly rebuked him and declared that such an idea as self-pity could only have originated from Satan. Then he continued by saying to His disciples: “It is not I alone who will go to the cross, but all you who follow and desire to be disciples must also go there. As my way is, so shall your way be. Do not incorrectly imagine that I alone must do God’s will; all of you as well shall do His will. In the same manner as I am not mindful of myself and unconditionally obey God’s will even to the death of the cross, so shall you deny your self life and be willing to lose it in obedience to God.” Peter told the Lord: “You must pity *Yourself!*” The Lord came back with: “You must *deny yourself.*”

There is a price to pay in following God’s will. The flesh trembles at such a prospect. While soul life reigns supreme within us we are unfit to accept God’s orders because it wishes to follow its will and not God’s. When He calls us to deny ourselves through the cross and renounce all for His sake, our natural life instinctively responds with self-pity. This renders us unwilling to pay any cost for God. Hence whenever we choose the narrow way of the cross and endure for Christ’s sake, our soul life shall suffer loss. This is how we lose that life. Only in this way can the spiritual life of Christ be enthroned pure and supreme, undertaking within us whatever is well pleasing to God and beneficial to men.

Now if we take note of this incident between Peter and the Lord we can readily perceive how wicked can be the functioning of this soul life. Peter uttered those carnal words of his *immediately* upon receiving revelation from God to know the mystery hitherto unknown to men - that the lonely Jesus Whom they were following was indeed the Christ of the living God. Directly following such an awesome revelation Peter was led captive by his self life into attempting to persuade his Master to pity Himself. How

this ought to impress us with the fact that no amount of spiritual revelation and lofty knowledge can ever guarantee freedom from the dominion of the soul. On the contrary, the higher our knowledge and the more profound our experience, the more hidden shall be our soul life, and the harder, consequently, to detect and eject. Unless the natural realm has been treated drastically by the cross it shall continue to be preserved within man.

Another lesson which we can learn from this instance with Peter is the utter uselessness of the natural life. On this particular occasion Peter's soul life is activated not for himself but for the Lord Jesus. He loves the Lord; he pities Him; he desires the Lord to be happy; he is deeply averse to the Lord suffering like that. His heart is alright and his intention is good, but it is founded upon human consideration derived from the soul life. All such considerations the Lord must reject. Even to desire after the Lord is not permitted if done by the flesh. Does this not demonstrate beyond doubt that we can indeed be soulish in serving and desiring the Lord? If the Lord Jesus Himself denies His soul life in service to God, He certainly does not want us to serve Him with that soul life. He beckons believers to commit their natural self to death, not simply because it loves the world, but also because it may even desire after the Lord. Our Lord never asks how much is done; He only inquires from whence it is done.

At the same time that Peter expresses his affection towards the Lord he is also unconsciously revealing his attitude towards himself. He esteems the physical body of the Lord more than the will of God. He tries to persuade the Lord Jesus to be careful for Himself. Peter's personality is therefore fully unveiled. How true it is that the self always operates independently of the will of God, for it loves to serve Him according to what it in itself deems to be good. Following God's wishes means the stripping away of the soul. Whenever His mind is obeyed, the soul's idea is crushed.

Because Peter on this occasion in Matthew 16 spoke out from His soul, the Lord Jesus called His disciples to forsake the natural life. But the Lord indicates additionally that what Peter has uttered is from Satan. We may therein realise how Satan can employ man's self life. As long as this is not delivered to death Satan possesses an operative instrument. Peter speaks because he cherishes the Lord, yet he is being manipulated by Satan. Peter prays the Lord to be kind to Himself, not knowing this prayer is inspired by the enemy. Satan can urge people to love the Lord or even teach people to pray. He is not apprehensive if people pray or love the Lord; what strikes fear in him is that they might not love the Lord or pray to Him with their natural energy. While soul life continues, his business prospers. May God show us how dangerous this life is, because believers may too quickly conclude that they are spiritual merely because they love the Lord or admire heavenly things. God's purpose can not be accomplished as long as Satan continues to find opportunity to work through that soul life which remains uncommitted to the death of the cross.

Self-pity, self-love, fear of suffering, withdrawal from the cross: these are some of the manifestations of soul life, for its prime motivation is self-preservation. It is exceedingly reluctant to endure any loss. This is precisely why the Lord summons us to deny self and take up our cross so as to crush our natural life. Every cross which passes before us beckons us to forsake our selves. We should not harbour any self-love but lay down our lives by the power of God. The Lord says to us that this cross is

ours, for we each receive from God our own particular cross. That is what we ought to bear. Although it is our cross, it nevertheless is closely connected with the cross of the Lord. If in the disposition which Christ displayed in relation to His cross we are willing to take up ours, then we shall find that the power of His cross abides in us and enables us to lose our natural life. Each time the cross is taken up, each time does the soul life suffer loss. Each time the cross is circumvented, each time is the soul life fed and preserved.

The Lord Jesus does not imply that dealing with our natural inclinations is a once for all matter. We find in Luke the word “daily” is added to our Lord’s call to take up the cross. Cross-bearing is continuous. The cross which condemned sin to death is an accomplished fact: all which remains for us to do is to acknowledge and receive it. But the cross through which we forfeit our soul life is different. Self-denial is not a matter already and completely accomplished; this we must experience daily. Now this does not mean that the soul life will never be lost or only be lost slowly. It simply bespeaks the fact that the cross which deals with the soul life operates differently from that which deals with sin. And the reason? Because death towards sin is accomplished for us by Christ: when He died, we died with Him. But the denial of the soul life is not an accomplished matter. We are required to take up our own cross daily by the power of the cross of Christ and determine daily to deny self until it is lost.

Renunciation of our natural life is not something which is done once and forever. As for sin, we only need take the ground of the cross (Romans 6:6) and immediately we are freed from its power and our servitude to it. In a moment this can be experienced with a full and perfect victory. But the self life must be overcome step by step. The deeper the Word of God penetrates (Hebrews 4:12), the deeper works the cross and the further the Holy Spirit completes the union of the life of our spirit with the Lord Jesus. How can believers deny the self when it is yet unknown to them? They can deny only that part of the soul life which they already recognise. God’s Word must lay bare more and more of our natural life so that the work of the cross can probe deeper and deeper. That is why the cross must be borne daily. To know more of God’s will and to know more of the self furnishes the cross increased ground to operate.

THE CROSS AND THE SOUL’S LOVE OF THE WORLD

Once again our Lord speaks: “Remember Lot’s wife. Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it” (Luke 17:32-33). Although these are by now familiar words to the reader, we must note the Lord here lays stress upon self-denial in relation to the things of this world. How irksome it seems for believers to have their hearts detached from earthly possessions. We need to follow our Lord’s admonition to remember Lot’s wife, for she was one who did not forget her possessions even in a time of the greatest peril. She was not guilty of having retraced a single step towards Sodom. All she did was look back. But how revealing was that backward glance! Does it not speak volumes concerning the condition of her heart?

It is possible for a believer outwardly to forsake the world and leave everything behind and yet inwardly cling to those very elements he had forsaken for the Lord’s sake. It does not require a consecrated person to return to the world or to repossess what he had forsaken in the world to indicate that the soul life is still active. If he but casts one

longing glance it is sufficient to disclose to us that he does not truly recognise where the world stands in relation to the cross.

When the soul life is genuinely crushed nothing of this world can again move a believer's heart. Soul life is worldly; hence it is attached to the things of the world. Only after one is actually willing to offer his soul life to death will he be fit to follow the "Sermon on the Mount" without flinching. Though in that "sermon" we do not find the Lord Jesus mentioning the work of the cross, we nonetheless know for certain that unless one experiences identification with Christ in death - not merely having died to sin but having died to the self life as well - he attempts in vain to keep our Lord's teachings enunciated on the Mount. He may appear to be following these instructions, but his heart is not one with his appearance. Only a Christian who has yielded his soul life can spontaneously and unpretentiously give away his cloak when he has been sued for his coat. He whose self life has been sacrificed to death is cut loose from the things of the world.

Gaining spiritual life is conditional on suffering loss. We can not measure our lives in terms of "gain"; they must be measured in terms of "loss." Our Teal capacity lies not in how much we retain but in how much has been poured out. Those who can afford to lose the most are those who have the most to give. The power of love is attested by love's sacrifice. If our hearts are not separated from love of the world, our soul life has yet to go through the cross.

"And you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property" (Hebrews 10:34). The believers referred to in this passage did not simply endure but even joyfully accepted the plundering of their goods. This is the work of the cross. The attitude of saints towards their possessions most assuredly signifies whether they continue to preserve their self life or whether they have consigned it to death.

If we desire to tread a pure spiritual path we must allow God to so operate in us that our hearts can be severed from everything pertaining to the world and be totally released from the intent of Lot's wife. This is the prerequisite for experiencing perfect life in, Christ. We can despise all the things in the world only after the Holy Spirit has shown the reality of heaven and its perfect life. Matters below and matters above defy comparison. The experience of the Apostle in Philippians 3 begins with esteeming everything as loss and proceeds to suffering the loss of all things. Therein does the Apostle come to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. Such is the perfect way. Often we are unconscious how powerful our self is until tested in regard to material matters. At times it seems we require more grace to lose our wealth than to lose our life! Earthly things truly represent an acid test for soul life.

God's children who indulge in eating and drinking and in ease and comfort need a deeper cutting away of the cross to free their spirit from the bondage and influence of the soul and to be free to live in God. Any who still banker after the things of the world have yet to learn how to lose their soul life through the deep penetration of the cross.

THE CROSS AND SOUL POWER

In the Gospel of John the Lord Jesus touches upon soul life once more. “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:24-25). He subsequently gives the explanation with these words: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32). John 12 records the most prosperous moment in our Lord’s life. Lazarus had been raised from the dead and many Jews believed in Him. Triumphant He entered into Jerusalem and was acclaimed by the populace. Even Gentiles sought to see Him. From the human viewpoint Calvary would now seem to be quite unnecessary, for could He not easily attract all men to Himself without going to the cross? But He knew better. Although his work appeared to be prosperous, He realised He could not grant life to men without His going to death. Calvary was the only way of salvation. If He died, He would draw all men to Himself and could indeed give life to all.

In John 12 the Lord explicitly describes the operation of the cross. He compares Himself to a grain of wheat. If it does not fall into the earth and die it remains *alone*. But if He be crucified and die, He shall impart life to many. The one condition is death. No death, no fruit. No other way is there to bear fruit than through death.

Our purpose, however, is not simply to learn about the Lord Jesus. We wish beyond this to draw particular attention to its relationship our soul life. The Lord applies the grain of wheat to Himself in verse 24, but in verse 25 He implies that every one of His disciples must follow in His footsteps. He pictures the grain as representing their self life. just as a grain is unable to bear fruit unless it dies, so there can be no spiritual fruit until the natural life has been broken through death. Here he emphasises the matter of fruitfulness. While the soul life does possess tremendous power it nevertheless can not fulfil the work of fruit-bearing. All the energies generated in the soul including talent, gift, knowledge and wisdom, can not enable believers to bear spiritual fruit. If the Lord Jesus must die to bear fruit so also must His disciples die in order to produce fruit. The Lord regards soulish power as of no help to God in His work of fruit-bearing.

The greatest peril for us in Christian service is to lean upon our selves and to draw upon our soul power - upon our talent, gift, knowledge, magnetism, eloquence or cleverness. The experience of countless spiritual believers confirms that unless our soulishness is definitely delivered to death and its life at all times inhibited from operating, it will be most active in service. If this is true of them, then how can those who are unwilling to yield up, or unwatchful in denying, their soul life prevent the intrusion of that life? Everything pertaining to our natural life must be handed over to death so that in no sense may we depend upon any of it but be willing instead to be led through death’s darkness of no support, no sensation, no sight, no understanding, and silently trust God Himself to work until we emerge on the other side of resurrection to possess a more glorious life. “He who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” Our soul is not annihilated; rather, by passing through death it affords God an opportunity to communicate His life to us. Not to lose the soul life in death shall mean great loss for the believer; but in losing it he will save it for eternity.

THE CROSS AND THE SOUL

Do not misunderstand this verse as signifying the inactivity of our mind and talent. The Lord clearly asserts that in losing our soul life we will keep it unto eternal life. just as “the sinful body might be destroyed” (Romans 6:6) does not mean the destruction of the hands, feet, ears and eyes of the human body, so too the committal of the soul life to death must not be construed as connoting the negation or destruction of any of its functions. Even though the body of sin has been destroyed, we still yield our “members to God as instruments of righteousness” (Romans 6:13); just so, when natural life is sacrificed to death, we shall find renewal, revival and restraint of the Holy Spirit in all the faculties of our soul. It can not therefore imply that henceforth we become wood and stone without feeling, thought or will because we must not or can not use any of the parts of the soul. Every part of the body as well as every organ of the soul still exists and is meant to be fully engaged; only now they are being renewed, revived and restrained by the Holy Spirit. The point at issue is whether the soul’s faculties are to be regulated by our natural life or by the supernatural life which indwells our spirit. These faculties remain as usual. What is unusual now is that the power which formerly activated them has been put to death; the Holy Spirit has made God’s supernatural power their life.

Let us amplify this subject a bit more. The various organs of our soul continue after the natural life has been relinquished in death. To nail the soul life to the cross does not at all imply that thereafter we shall be completely lacking in our thought, emotion and will. We distinctly read in the Bible of God’s thought, intent, desire, satisfaction, love and joy. Moreover, the Scriptures often record that our Lord Jesus “loved, rejoiced,” “was sorrowful”; it is even recorded that “Jesus wept,” that He “offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears” in Gethsemane’s Gardens. Were His soul faculties annihilated? And do we become cold and dead persons? Man’s soul is man’s own self. It is where one’s personality resides and whence it is expressed. If the soul does not accept power from the spirit life, then it will draw its power for living from its natural soulical life. The soul as a composite of organs continues, but the soul as a life principle must be denied. That power must be consigned to death so that the power of the Holy Spirit alone may operate all the parts of the soul, without interference from the natural life.

Herein do we see resurrection life. Without the supernatural life of God there can be no resurrection after death. The Lord Jesus could go through death and yet be raised because resident in Him is God’s uncreated life. This life can not be destroyed: it instead will always emerge into the fullness and glory of resurrection. Jesus poured out His soul to death and committed His spirit (in which was God’s life) back into the hands of God. His death set Him free from soul life and released God’s spiritual life unto greater splendour.

It is difficult indeed to understand why God, upon transmitting His life to us, then requires us to experience co-death with Christ so that His life may be resurrected in us. This is nonetheless God’s law of life. And once possessing God’s life, we then are empowered to periodically go through death and continue to come out alive. By continuously losing our soul life in death, we may continuously gain more abundantly and gloriously of God’s life in resurrection.

God's aim is to take our soul life through death in company with His Own life in us; whenever His life in us is resurrected in our daily experience our soul also is raised with Him and produces fruit to eternity. This is one of the most profound lessons in spiritual life. The Holy Spirit alone can unfold to us the necessity of death as well as that of resurrection. May the Spirit of revelation make us understand how much our spiritual experience shall suffer if we do not hate our natural life and deliver it to death. Only when our soul accompanied by God's indwelling life passes through death and resurrection can we bear spiritual fruit and keep it for life eternal.

CHAPTER FIVE
SPIRITUAL BELIEVERS AND THE SOUL
THE DIVIDING OF SPIRIT AND SOUL

Our lengthy discussion as to the difference between spirit and soul and their respective operations has been to lead us to this present point. For a believer who strives after God the element to be apprehensive about is the inordinate activity of the soul beyond the measure set by God. The soul has been in ascendancy for such long duration that in the matter of consecration it even presumes to take upon itself the task of realising that act to God's satisfaction. Many Christians are unaware how drastically the cross must work so that ultimately their natural power for living may be denied. They do not know the reality of the indwelling Holy Spirit nor that His authority must extend to gathering under His control the thoughts, desires and feelings of the entire being. Without their having an inner appreciation of this, the Holy Spirit is unable to accomplish everything He wishes to do. The greatest temptation for an earnest and zealous saint is to engage his own strength in God's service rather than to wait humbly for the Holy Spirit to will and to perform.

The call of the cross of the Lord Jesus is to beckon us to hate our natural life, to seek opportunity to lose, not to keep, it. Our Lord wants us to sacrifice self and be yielded wholly to the working of His Spirit. If we are to experience afresh His true life in the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we must be willing to present to death every opinion, labour and thought of the soul life. The Lord additionally touches upon the issue of our hating or loving our self life. The soul is invariably "self-loving." Unless from the very depth of our heart we abhor our natural life, we shall not be able to walk genuinely by the Holy Spirit. Do we not realise that the basic condition for a spiritual walk is to fear our self and its wisdom and to rely absolutely upon the Spirit?

This war between the soul and the spirit is waged secretly but interminably within God's children. The soul seeks to retain its authority and move independently, while the spirit strives to possess and master everything for the maintenance of God's authority. Before the spirit achieves its ascendancy the soul has tended to take the lead in all regards. Should a believer allow self to be the master while expecting the Holy Spirit to help and to bless him in his work, he undoubtedly will fail to produce spiritual fruit. Christians can not anticipate a walk and work pleasing to God if they have not crushed their soul life by persistently denying its authority and unconditionally laying it in the dust. Except all power, impatience, and activity of the natural life are deliberately and one by one delivered to the cross and a ceaseless vigil is maintained, it will seize every chance to revive itself. The reason for so many defeats in the spiritual realm is because this sector of the soul has not been dealt with drastically. If soul life is not stripped away through death but is allowed to mingle with the spirit, believers shall continue in defeat. If our walk does not exclusively express God's power it shall soon be vanquished by man's wisdom and opinion.

Our natural life is a formidable obstacle to spiritual life. Never satisfied with God alone, it invariably adds something extra to God. Hence it is never at peace. Before the self is touched God's children live by very changeable stimulations and sensations. That is why they exhibit a wavy up and down existence. Because they allow their soulcal

energies to mix in with spiritual experiences their ways are often unstable. They accordingly are not qualified to lead others. Their unrelinquished soul power continually deflects them from letting the spirit be central. In the excitement of soulful emotion the spirit suffers great loss in freedom and sensation.

Joy and sorrow may imperil the believer's self-control and set self-consciousness on a rampage. The mind, if overly active, may affect and disturb the quietness of the spirit. To admire spiritual knowledge is good, but should it exceed spiritual bounds the result shall be merely letter, not spirit. This explains why many workers, though they preach the most excellent truth, are so cold and dead. Many saints who seek a spiritual walk share a common experience - one of groanings because their soul and spirit are not at one. The thought, will and emotion of their soul often rebel against the spirit, refuse to be directed by the spirit and resort to independent actions which contradict the spirit. The life in their spirit is bound to suffer in such a situation.

Now given a condition like this in the believer, the teaching in Hebrews 4:12 takes on paramount significance. For the Holy Spirit instructs us therein how to divide spirit and soul experientially. The dividing of these two is not a mere doctrine; it is pre-eminently a life, a must in the believer's walk. Just what is its essential meaning? It means, first of all., that by His Word and through His indwelling Spirit God enables the Christian to differentiate in experience the operations and expressions of the spirit as distinct from those of the soul. Thus he may perceive what is of the spirit and what is of the soul.

The dividing of these two elements denotes additionally that through willing cooperation the child of God can follow a pure spiritual path unimpeded by the soul. The Holy Spirit in Hebrews 4 sets forth the high-priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus and also explains its relationship to us. Verse 12 declares that "the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." And verse 13 follows by informing us that "before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do." These therefore tells us how much the Lord Jesus fulfils His work as High Priest with respect to our spirit and soul. The Holy Spirit compares the believer to a sacrifice on the altar. During the Old Testament period when people presented an offering, they bound their sacrifice to the altar. The priest then came and killed it with a sharp knife, parting it into two and piercing to the division of the joints and marrow, thus exposing to view all that formerly had been hidden from human sight. Afterwards it was burned with fire as an offering to God. The Holy Spirit uses this event to illustrate the work of the Lord Jesus towards believers and the experience of the believers in the Lord. just as the sacrifice of old was cut asunder by the priests' knife so that the joints and marrow were exposed and divided, even so the believer today has his soul and spirit split apart by the Word of God as used by our High Priest, the Lord Jesus. This is that the soul may no longer affect the spirit nor the spirit any more be under the soul's authority; rather, each will find its rightful place, with neither confusion nor mixture.

As at the first the Word of God had operated on creation by separating light from darkness, so now it works within us as the Sword of the Spirit, piercing to the separation of the spirit and soul. Hence the noblest habitation of God - our spirits - is wholly separated from the base desires of our souls. Wherefore we come to appreciate

how our spirit is the dwelling place of God the Holy Spirit and how our soul with all its energy shall indeed do the will of God as revealed to the human spirit by the Holy Spirit. No room can there be then for any independent action.

As the priest of old split the sacrifice, so our High Priest today divides our soul and spirit. As the priestly knife was of such sharpness that the sacrifice was cut into two, piercing to the separation of the closely knit joints and marrow, so the Word of God which the Lord Jesus currently uses is keener than any two-edged sword and is able to split cleanly apart the most intimately related spirit and soul there may be.

The Word of God is “living” for it has living power: “active” because it knows how to work: “sharper than any two edged sword” since it can pierce into the spirit. What God’s Word has penetrated is much deeper than the soul; it reaches into the innermost spirit. God’s Word leads His people into a realm more profound than one of mere sensation; it brings them into the realm of the eternal spirit. Those who wish to be established in God must know the meaning of this penetration into the spirit. The Holy Spirit alone can teach us what is soul life and what is spirit life. Only after we learn how to differentiate experientially these two kinds of life and come to apprehend their respective values, are we delivered from a shallow, loose, sensational walk into that which is deep, firm and spiritual. Only then do we come into rest. The soul life can never furnish us rest. But please note that this must be known *in experience*; simply understanding in the mind will merely make us more soulish.

We need to pay special attention to this piercing and dividing. The Word of God plunges into the soul as well as into the spirit in order to effect the division of these two. The Lord Jesus in His crucifixion had His hands and feet and side pierced. Are we willing to let the cross work in our soul and spirit? A sword pierced through Mary’s soul (Luke 2:35). Although her “Son” was given by God, she was required to let go of Him and to relinquish all her authority and demands upon Him. Even though her soul craved to cling tenaciously to Him Mary must deny her natural affection.

The cleaving of soul and spirit means not only their separation but also a cracking open of the soul itself. Since the spirit is enveloped in the Soul, it can not be reached by the Word of life save through a cracked shell. The Word of the cross plunges in and splits open a way into and through the soul so that God’s life can reach the spirit within and liberate it from the bondage of its soulish shell. Having received the mark of the cross, the soul now can assume its proper position of subjection to the spirit. But if the soul fails to become a “thoroughfare” to the spirit, then the former surely will become the latter’s chain. These two never agree on any matter. Before the spirit achieves its rightful place of pre-eminence it is challenged persistently by the soul. While the spirit is striving to gain freedom and mastery the strong soul power exerts its utmost strength to suppress the spirit. Only after the cross has done its work on the soulish life is the spirit liberated. If we remain ignorant of the damage this discord between the spirit and soul can bring or remain unwilling to forsake the pleasure of a sensuous walk, we shall make hardly any spiritual progress. As long as the siege thrown up by the soul is not lifted the spirit can not be freed.

Upon carefully studying the teaching of this fragment of Scripture, we may conclude that the dividing of spirit and soul hinges upon two factors: the cross and God’s Word. Before the priest could use his knife the sacrifice had to be placed on the altar. The

altar in the Old Testament speaks of the cross in the New Testament. Believers can not expect their High Priest to wield God's sharp Sword, His Word which pierces to the separation of soul and spirit, unless first they are willing to come to the cross and accept its death. Lying on the altar always precedes the plunging of the sword. Hence all who desire to experience the parting of soul and spirit must answer the Lord's call to Calvary and lay themselves unreservedly on the altar, trusting their High Priest to operate with His keen Sword to the dividing asunder of their spirit and soul. For us to lie on the altar is our free will offering well pleasing to God; to use the sword to divide is the work of the priest. We should fulfil our part with all faithfulness, and commit the rest to our merciful and faithful High Priest. And at the appropriate time He shall lead us into a complete spiritual experience.

We need to follow the footsteps of our Lord. As He was dying, Jesus poured out His soul to death (Isaiah 53:12) but committed His spirit to God (Luke 23:46). We must do now what He did before. If we truly pour out the soul life and commit our spirit to God we too shall know the power of resurrection and shall enjoy a perfect spiritual way in the glory of resurrection.

THE PRACTICE

We have just seen how the High Priest operates if we accept the cross. We shall consider next the practical side; that is, how we may arrive at the experience of having the Lord Jesus divide our soul and spirit.

1. Know the necessity of having the spirit and soul divided. Without this knowledge no such request will be made. Christians ought to petition the Lord to show them the abhorrence of a mixed spirit and soul life and also the reality of that deeper walk in God which is wholly spirit and uninterrupted by the soul. They should understand that a mixed life is a frustrated life.

2. Ask for the separation of soul and spirit. After knowing, there must be a genuinely earnest desire in the heart, a requesting that this mingled soul and spirit be cut apart. Just here the question rests with the human will. Should believers prefer to enjoy what they themselves consider the best life and not desire to have their soul and spirit divided, God will respect their personal rights and not force them into such experience.

3. Yield specifically. If believers definitely desire the experience of having their soul and spirit separated, they must consign themselves to the altar of the cross in a specific manner. They must be willing to accept totally every consequence of the operation of the cross and be conformed to the death of the Lord. Before they encounter the cleaving of soul and spirit believers need to bend their will continuously and incessantly towards God and actively choose to have this cleavage. And as the High Priest accomplishes this division in them their heart attitude should be that He should not stay His hand.

4. Stand on Romans 6:11. God's children need to watch lest in seeking to experience the separation of soul and spirit they fall back into sin. Remember that this separating is built upon their having died to sin. Hence they should maintain daily the attitude of Romans 6:11, considering themselves verily dead to sin. Additionally, they should

stand on Romans 6:12 and not permit sin to reign in their mortal bodies. This attitude will deprive their natural life any opportunity to sin through the body.

5. Pray and study the Bible. Christians ought to search the Bible with prayer and meditation. They should let God's Word penetrate thoroughly into their souls so as to enable their natural life to be purified. If they actually do what God says, their soul life shall not be able to continue its free activity. This is the meaning of 1 Peter 1:22 - "having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth."

6. Daily bear the cross. Because the Lord desires to sever our spirit and soul He arranges crosses in our everyday affairs for us to bear. To take up the cross daily, to deny self at all times, to make no provision for the flesh - not even for a moment, and to be shown constantly by the Holy Spirit what are the activities of the soul in our lives: this is spiritual life. Through faithful obedience we shall be led to encounter the dividing of soul and spirit so that we may experience a pure spiritual walk.

7. Live according to the spirit. This is a condition not only for our preservation but also for a distinct cleavage between spirit and soul. We must seek to walk by our spirit in all respects, distinguishing what is of the spirit and what is of the soul and resolving as well to follow the former while rejecting the latter. Learn to recognise the working of the spirit and follow it.

These are the conditions which we on our side must fulfil. The Holy Spirit requires our co-operation. The Lord will not be able to do His part should we fail to do ours. But were we to discharge our responsibility, our High Priest would tear apart our spirit and soul with the sharp Sword of His Spirit in the power of His cross. Everything which belongs to emotion, sensation, mind and natural energy would be separated one after another from the spirit so as to leave no trace of fusion. To lie on the altar is what we must do, but to divide the soul from the spirit with the well honed knife is what our High Priest undertakes. If we truly commit ourselves to the cross our High Priest shall not fail to execute His ministry in separating our spirit and soul. We need not worry about His part. Upon seeing we have fulfilled the requirements for His working He shall part our spirit and soul at the appropriate time thereafter.

Those who have apprehended the danger of a mixture of these two organs can not but seek deliverance. Open though the road is to deliverance, it nevertheless is not without its difficulties. Believers must persevere in prayer that they may see clearly their own pitiful state and understand the indwelling, working, and demands of the Holy Spirit. They need to know the mystery and reality of the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. May they honour such holy presence; may they be careful not to grieve Him; may they know that, aside from sin, what grieves Him the most as well as what harms themselves the deepest is to walk and labour according to their own life. The first and original sin of man was to seek what is good, wise and intellectual according to his own idea. God's children today often make the same mistake. They should realise that since they have believed in the Lord and have the Holy Spirit indwelling them, they ought to give the Spirit complete authority over their souls. Do we think because we have prayed and asked the Holy Spirit to reveal His mind and to work in us, that all shall accordingly be done? That assumption is not the truth; for unless we deliver to death specifically and daily our natural life, together with its power, wisdom, self, and

sensation and unless we equally desire honestly in our mind and will to obey and rely upon the Holy Spirit, we shall not see Him actually performing the work.

The Lord's people should understand that it is the Word of God which parts their soul and spirit. The Lord Jesus is Himself the living Word of God, so He Himself effects the division. Are we disposed to let His life and accomplished work stand between our soul and spirit? Are we ready to have His life so fill our spirit that the soul life is immobilised?

The Bible is God's written Word. The Lord Jesus uses the teaching of the Bible to separate our soul and spirit. Are we willing to follow the truth? Are we ready to do what the Scriptures teach? Can we obey the Lord in accordance with the teaching of Scripture without putting in our opinion as well? Do we consider the authority of the Bible as sufficient without seeking human help in our obedience? We must obey the Lord and everything He teaches us in His Word if we would desire to enter upon a true spiritual path. This is the Sword which is operative to the cleaving of our soul and spirit.

THE SOUL UNDER THE SPIRIT'S CONTROL

Very early in this volume we likened our whole being - spirit, soul, and body - to the ancient Jewish temple of God's habitation. God dwells in the Holy of Holies. A curtain separates it from the Holy Place. This curtain seems to enclose God's glory and presence within the Holy of Holies, barring His glory from the Holy Place. Men of that time therefore can only know the things outside the curtain in the Holy Place. Apart from faith they in their outward life can not sense the presence of God.

This curtain however, only exists temporarily. At the appointed hour, when the flesh of our Lord Jesus (which is the reality of the curtain, Hebrews 10:20) was crucified on the cross, the curtain was rent from top to bottom. What separated the Holiest and the Holy Place was removed. God's aim was not to dwell permanently just in the Holy of Holies. Quite the contrary. He desired to extend His presence to the Holy Place too. He was merely waiting for the cross to complete its work, for it is the cross alone which can rend the curtain and permit God's glory to shine out from the Holiest Place.

God today would have His own enjoy such a temple experience in their spirit and soul: if only the cross is allowed to perfect its work in them. As they ungrudgingly obey the Holy Spirit the communion between the Holy and the Holiest grows deeper day by day until they experience a great change. It is the cross which effects the rending of the curtain; that is, the cross so functions in the life of the believer that he has a rent curtain experience between his spirit and soul. His natural life renounces its independence and waits upon the spirit life for direction and supply.

The curtain was torn in two, "from top to bottom" (Mark 15:38). This has to be God's doing, not man's. When the work of the cross is finished God tears the curtain. This can not be achieved either by our labours or by our strength, not even by our entreaty. The moment the cross accomplishes its task at that moment is the curtain rent. Let us therefore renew our consecration and offer ourselves to God without reservation. Let us be willing to have our soul life committed to death in order that the Lord Who dwells in the Holiest may finish His work. If he observes that the cross has wrought

thoroughly enough in us the Lord shall indeed integrate the Holiest and the Holy within us just as He centuries ago rent the curtain by His might so that His Holy Spirit might flow out from His glorious body.

Thus shall the glory in the shelter of the Most High overwhelm our daily sensuous life. All our walk and work in the Holy Place shall be sanctified in the glory of the Holiest. Like our spirit is, so shall our soul too be indwelt and regulated by the Holy Spirit of God. Our mind, emotion and will shall be filled by Him. What we have maintained by faith in the spirit we now also know and experience in the soul, nothing lacking and nothing lost. What a blessed life is this! “And the glory of the Lord filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord’s house” (2 Chronicles 7:1-2). However lovely our activities of priestly service may have seemed in the Holy Place, they all shall cease in the glorious light of God. Henceforth His glory governs everything. No more is animal activity adored.

This brings us to the other, and equally significant, aspect of the dividing of spirit and soul. In so far as the soul’s influence and control of the spirit is concerned, the work of the cross is to effect the division of the two; but in so far as the spirit’s filling and reigning is concerned, the cross works towards the surrender of the soul’s independence so that it may be reconciled completely to the spirit. Believers, should seek to experience oneness of spirit and soul. Were we to allow the cross and the Holy Spirit to operate thoroughly in us we would discover that what the soul has relinquished is scarcely a fraction of what it ultimately gains: the dead has now come into fruition, the lost is now kept for eternal life. When our soul is brought under the reins of the spirit it undergoes an immense change. Beforehand it seems to be useless and lost to God because it is employed for self and often moves independently; afterwards God gains our soul, though to man it may appear to be crushed. We become as “those who have faith and keep their souls” (Hebrews 10:39). This is much more profound than what we commonly term “saved,” because it points especially to life. Since we have learned not to walk by sensation and sight, we are now able to save our life by faith into serving and glorifying God. “Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21). As God’s Word is implanted we receive its new nature into us and are thus enabled to bear fruit. We obtain the life of the Word from the Word of life. Although the organs of the soul still remain, these organs no longer function through its power; rather, they operate by the power of God’s Word. This is “the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:9).

Human nerves are rather sensitive and are easily stirred by outside stimuli. Words, manners environments and feelings greatly affect us. Our mind engages in so many thoughts, plans and imaginations that it is a world of confusion. Our will is agitated to perform many acts according to our sundry delights. None of the organs of our soul can bring us into peace. Singly or collectively, they disturb, they confuse, they shift us around. But when our soul is in the spirit’s hand we can be released from such disturbances. The Lord Jesus implores us: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:29). If we are favourably inclined to yield to the Lord, to take up His yoke, and to follow Him, our soul shall not be aroused inordinately. If we learn of Him by seeing bow He, when despised by men, continued to follow God’s will and not His Own, our soul shall return to tranquillity. The reason for our hurt feelings lies in the fact that we

are not amenable to being treated as our Lord was and are loathe to submit ourselves to the will and ordering of God. Were we to deliver our natural energies to death and capitulate entirely to the Lord, our soul, though so nervously sensitive, would rest in the Lord and not misunderstand Him.

The soul which comes under the Holy Spirit's authority is a restful one. Once we busily planned, today we calmly trust the Lord. Once we were flushed with anxieties, today we are like a child quieted at its mother's breast. Once we entertained many thoughts and ambitions, today we consider God's will best and rest ourselves in Him. In obeying the Lord wholly, we rejoice in heart fully. With complete consecration comes perfect peace. "As bondmen of Christ doing the will of God from the soul" (Ephesians 6:6 Darby). We do not rely upon the soul to execute God's will, rather we perform His will from the soul, that is, with our whole heart. The soul which once rebelled against God's desire is now perfectly committed to Him through the operation of the cross. That which carried out its own will, or tried to do God's will by its own idea, is now of one heart with God in all things.

A soul under the rule of the Holy Spirit never worries for itself. "Do not be anxious about your life (original, "soul")" (Matthew 6:25). We now seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness because we believe God will supply our daily need. Once touched by the cross through the Holy Spirit, the soul no longer is able to be anxious about itself. While self-consciousness is the soul's prime expression, yet believers actually lose their self in God; hence they can trust God utterly. Every work of the soul, including self-love, self-seeking and self-pride, have been so eliminated that believers are no longer self-centred.

Because the cross has done its task we do not busily plan any more for ourselves. Instead of suffering anxiety we can restfully seek God's kingdom and righteousness. We know if we care for God's cares that God will take care of our cares. Once we wondered at miracles, now we live by the God of miracles and know in experience how God provides every need. This all flows naturally since God's power is backing us. The cares of this life emerge as very small items indeed along our daily path.

"Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will do right and entrust their souls to a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19). Many people know God as the Creator but not as Father; believers, though, should experience Him not only as Father but also as Creator. As the latter God reveals to us His power. By this we will understand and acknowledge that the whole universe is in fact in His hand. Formerly it was hard for us to believe the idea that things in the world could not move against His will; but now we know that every element in the universe - be it human, natural, or supernatural - is under His careful scrutiny and clever ordering. We now acknowledge that all things come to us either through His order or by His permission. A soul governed by the Holy Spirit is a trusting one.

Our soul ought to desire the Lord as well as to trust Him. "My soul clings to thee" (Psalm 63:8). No more do we dare be independent of God nor do we dare serve the Lord according to the idea of the soul. Rather, we today follow Him with fear and trembling and trail after Him closely. Our soul genuinely clings to the Lord. No more is there independent action, but instead a full surrender to Him. And this is not by

compulsion; we do it gladly. What we henceforth hate is our life; what we wholly love is the Lord.

Such persons can not but utter the cry of Mary: "My soul magnifies the Lord" (Luke 1:46). No longer is there self-importance, either in public or in private. These believers recognise and admit their incompetence and only wish to exalt the Lord with humbleness of heart. They will not steal the Lord's glory any further but magnify Him in their souls.

For if the Lord is not magnified in the soul, nowhere else is He magnified either.

Only such as these count not their life (original, "soul") of any value (Acts 20:24) and can lay down their lives (original, "souls") for the brethren (1 John 3:16). Unless self-love is abandoned the believer shall forever shrink back when called actually to take up the cross for Christ. He who lives a martyr's life and is willing to nail his self to the cross is able as well to die a martyr's death if ever the need should arise. He can lay down his life for his brother if occasion demands it because in ordinary days he has denied himself continuously and has not sought his own right or comfort but has poured out his soul for the brethren. True love towards the Lord and the brethren arises out of no love for self. He "loved me" and "gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Love flows from the denial of the self-life. Blood-shedding is the source of blessing.

Such a life is in truth one of prosperity, as is written: "thy soul prospers" (3 John 2 Darby). This prosperity originates not with what self has gained but with what self has denied. A soul lost is not a life lost, for the soul is lost in God. Soul-life is selfish and therefore binds us. But the soul renounced shall abide in the boundlessness of God's life. This is liberty, this is prosperity. The more we lose the more we gain. Our possessions are not measured by how much we receive but by how much we give. How fruitful is this life!

To forsake the soul life, however, is not as easy as deliverance from sin. Since it is our *life*, the choice is ours to make daily not to live by it but by the life of God. The cross needs to be borne faithfully and to be borne increasingly faithfully. Let us gaze upon our Lord Jesus Who "endured the cross, despising the shame": "Consider him . . . , that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls" (Hebrews 12:2-3 ASV). The race set before us is none other than that of His despising the shame and enduring His cross.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" (Psalm 103:1)