

Man's Spirit, Soul, and Body After the Fall

by Watchman Nee

The fall of man has resulted in the spirit becoming dead to God, the soul becoming developed and exalted, and the body becoming subject to the soul and the flesh.

Topics: "The Nature of Man", "Spiritual Order"

Description

Watchman Nee discusses the tragic consequences of the Fall, explaining how man's spirit, once the highest part of his being, became dead to God after Adam's disobedience. He illustrates the original order of spirit, soul, and body, emphasizing that the spirit should govern the soul, which in turn directs the body. However, after the Fall, the spirit lost its sensitivity to God, leading to a disorderly existence where the flesh ultimately rules. Nee warns that reliance on the soulish life, which is rooted in human intellect and emotions, leads to spiritual death and separation from God. He calls for a return to the original divine order where the spirit reigns supreme, restoring true fellowship with God.

Transcript

The spirit was once the highest part of man's whole being; both the soul and the body were under it. Under normal circumstances, the spirit is like the matriarch, the soul is like the steward, and the body is like the servant. When the matriarch needs something done, she assigns the work to the steward. The steward in turn orders the servants severally to accomplish the task. Unfortunately, man fell, failed, and sinned! As a result, the original, proper order of spirit, soul, and body was upset.

Adam was able to live by the breath of life, which is the spirit. The spirit has the God-consciousness: it knows God's voice, fellowships with God, and is endowed with an extremely keen sense toward God. After Adam fell, his spirit died.

At the beginning God said to Adam, "For in the day that thou eatest thereof [the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). After Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, they still lived for a few hundred years. This shows that the death that God spoke of was not confined to the death of the body. What kind of death was this death? The scientific definition of death is a termination of communication with the environment. Since the death of Adam was not confined to his body only, it must refer also to the death of his spirit. The death of the spirit does not mean that the spirit has disappeared. It means that the spirit has lost its sensitive awareness toward God, that is, it is dead to God. The death of the spirit means that it can no longer fellowship with God. For example, here is a dumb person. It is not that this person has lost his mouth or his throat. He cannot speak because there is something wrong with

his mouth. His mouth is dead in respect to the human language. Because of Adam's disobedience, his spirit became dead. He still had the spirit, but it was dead with respect to God. If Adam had exercised his judgment to choose the tree of life, God's eternal life would have entered into his spirit and would have changed his inner man through his soul. His earthen, outer body, which was destined for death and corruption, would also have been changed. However, his inner man became disorderly and fallen. As a result, his outward body had to die and decay.

The fruit of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" is the fruit that uplifts man's soul and subdues man's spirit. In this world the knowledge of good and evil is the work of the soul. God forbade man to eat of this tree, not because He wanted to test man, but because He knew that within man there is the soulish life as well as the spiritual life. This is God's love. He knew that if man were to eat of this tree, his soulish life would be developed and his spiritual life would die. This means that man would lose his God-consciousness and would be dead to God. In this world the knowledge of good and evil is always wicked. Knowledge comes from the intellectual part of man's soul. When man ate of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," surely his soulish life was developed and exalted. Once the soulish life became developed and exalted, the spiritual life was suppressed, and man lost his God-consciousness, as if he were dead.

From this point on, his spirit and the spirits of his descendants were suppressed by the soul. Soon, through the soul's suppressing, the spirit was joined to the soul, and the two became closely interwoven. This is why Paul mentioned in Hebrews 4:12 that the word of God is sharp to the dividing of the spirit and the soul. It is because the spirit and the soul have been joined together that there needs to be the dividing. Since the soul and the spirit were so tightly interwoven together, man began to live in his speculative mind. In everything, he began to walk according to his intellect or his feeling. The spirit, having completely lost its power and senses, fell into a lifeless sleep. In Jude 19 it says, "Soulish, having no spirit." The spirit here does not refer to the Holy Spirit, but to the human spirit. Since the first part of this expression, "soulish," refers to man's soul, the spirit in the second part of the expression should be the human spirit. This can also be proved from the article in Greek. To be soulish and to not have spirit really mean that the spirit is shut off by the soul and has lost its function. Although it is alive, it is as if it were dead.

From this point, everything went downhill. The flesh of the body began to rule. Hence, by the time of the flood, man had become "flesh" (Gen. 6:3).

When man is soulish, he will often feel that this life is untrustworthy and will seek for eternal life in the coming age. However, the doctrine of life can never be secured by the human mind and theory. None of these things are reliable. Often two very clever people will disagree with each other in their opinions. Theories easily lead men to the place of error; they are the towers in dreams, only leading men to the place of eternal darkness.

When man is of the flesh, he is controlled by the cravings and lusts of his body. He has to satisfy his senses of sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch. The vilest of all sins arise from these senses.

Our whole person is divided into three parts: the spirit, the soul, and the body. God's intention is that the spirit would remain on top, controlling the soul. After man became soulish, the spirit fell and became subject to the soul. After man became fleshly, the vile flesh became the king. Man fell from being "spirit-ruled" to being "soul-ruled," and from being "soul-ruled," he fell to being "flesh-ruled." This gradual fall ended with the flesh assuming the authority. What a shame this is!

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