

The Characteristic of a Believer Having His Spirit and Soul Mixed Together

by Watchman Nee

A soulish believer is someone who has their spirit and soul mixed together, and is controlled by their mind, emotion, and will, but must seek the more abundant life and pass through training and scourging from God to overcome their soulish nature.

Scripture: Romans 8:5, Philippians 2:13, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Separation of Spirit and Soul"

Description

Watchman Nee discusses the characteristics of believers whose spirit and soul are intertwined, highlighting that while they may possess spiritual gifts and experiences, they remain largely soulish. These believers often confuse their emotional and mental states with true spiritual experiences, leading to a lack of genuine peace and reliance on the Holy Spirit. They are self-satisfied and unaware of their need for deeper transformation, often seeking knowledge and emotional highs rather than true spiritual growth. Nee emphasizes the necessity of separating the spirit from the soul to achieve a more abundant spiritual life, which requires humility and a willingness to undergo God's refining process. Ultimately, he calls for believers to recognize their reliance on the soul-life and to seek the Holy Spirit's work in their lives for true spiritual maturity.

Transcript

Who are the believers who have their spirit and soul mixed together? The soulish men whom we spoke of previously are those who are fully soulish. However, there are believers who are more advanced than these. They have been released from the power of sin. They are no longer minding the flesh and walking according to flesh. They have heard of the excellence of the spiritual life and may even have tasted it once or twice, yet they have not received within themselves a deep work of the cross and of the Holy Spirit. As a result, they are still looking to the natural, original life, that is, the soul, to supply them with the power for their living. They are still soulish, yet believers in this stage are often filled with gifts from God. Because they have so many gifts and so many "third heaven" experiences, they have a high esteem of themselves (however deeply hidden in their heart it may be) and consider themselves matchless spiritual men. They do not realize that they are still soulish men having their spirit mixed together with their soul.

Those believers whose spirit and soul are mixed together are in reality soulish. Yet in their knowledge, they seem to be spiritual. For this kind of believer, the spirit and the soul are combined as one. Although

his soul has been separated from his flesh (the sinful nature), his spirit is not yet separated from his soul. Formerly, while he was fleshly, his soul was closely attached to his flesh. One was his life, and the other was the nature of his life. Now, in the same way, his spirit is attached to his soul. One contributes the propositions, and the other, the power. The body is the outer shell of the soul, and the soul is the outer shell of the spirit. We should remember this: the soul is the shell of the spirit. As such, the spirit is surrounded by the soul and is constantly affected by the soul. The soul includes the mind, the emotion, the sensations, the will, and so forth. Since the spirit is surrounded by the soul, it seems to be buried within the soul. Therefore, it is often affected by the mind and the sensations. A regenerated person should have an unspeakable peace in his spirit, but because his spirit is not yet separated from his soul, a little agitation will disturb the peace and tranquillity in the spirit. Sometimes the soul is filled with joy and influences the spirit, apparently making it joyful as well. Such a believer would think that he is the happiest person on earth! Yet when he is agitated, he would think that he is the most miserable man on earth! This is the constant experience of the soulish believer.

This kind of believer has a fairly, if not extremely, common characteristic: when he hears about the teaching concerning the separation of the soul from the spirit, he is very eager to know where his spirit is. Yet, despite desperate searching, he does not seem to feel the spirit. Because many believers do not have the genuine experience of being in spirit, they naturally do not know what is their spirit and what is their soul. Because their spirit and soul are so tightly interwoven and because they are unable to differentiate between the spirit and the soul, they consider their own soulish experiences, such as joy, vision, a fiery love in their heart, and so forth, as matchless spiritual experiences. Actually, it is better for them to consider that they have no spiritual experiences at all, than to suffer loss through confusing the soul with the spirit.

Because such a believer exercises much of the power of his soul-life in carrying out the suggestions of his new nature, it becomes possible for the soul-life to work and act without passing through any rejection. Since the believer is not aware of the inadequacy of the power of the soul-life in carrying out righteousness, he accepts everything as long as it is not from the flesh, thinking that it is from the spirit. He thinks that, other than the flesh, there is nothing else that needs to be rejected, that besides the flesh, everything is spiritual. For this reason, the soul-life is given the full liberty and opportunity to work. This is why we see so many believers seeking to overcome the flesh and sins, but few believers seeking to overcome their own life, which is the soul-life.

Although the soul includes many things, a soulish believer is controlled mostly by two elements, his mind and his emotion. The will controls him to a certain degree, but not as much as the mind and the emotion do. If one does not know how to control the soul, it becomes possible for the mind and the emotion to work. Those believers in this stage are controlled mainly by their own mind. They love knowledge and love to seek after the truth. They cannot be satisfied until they understand something completely in their mind. They love intriguing thoughts. They like to know more because they think that what they know is what they possess. They are also controlled by their emotion. They seek to feel the Lord's presence and to have feelings of joy. When they feel a burning fire within their heart, they can walk a hundred miles and can go on in leaps and bounds in their spiritual journey (outwardly speaking, of course). If they do not have this feeling or if they feel depressed, they will become sluggish and will not go on at all. They want good feelings. The good and bad feelings in their heart determine the highs and lows of their outward spiritual state. They are also controlled by their will. They have not received the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill in them the promise of Philippians 2:13. They think that determination is the beginning and end of all works.

They make many resolutions and set many rules and regulations, only to be brought into more bondage. None of these help them to make a true advance in the spiritual life.

The most pitiful thing is that believers at this stage are usually self-satisfied and very stubborn in holding on to their experience. They think that all their knowledge is spiritual knowledge. They boast of the riches in their ``brain-bank." They think that their occasional ``third heaven" experiences are spiritual experiences. They indulge themselves in feelings, in fiery sensations, in joy, and in the presence of the Lord; they think that besides this, there is no higher spiritual living. Yet they would not admit humbly that outward matters still distract their hearts and disturb their peace. Their conduct is an outward performance that comes from much scheming and planning and does not match their inward condition.

It is when God opens their eyes and makes them aware of the more abundant life reserved for them that they become willing to seek for the way to annul the soulish part of their being. But it is not an easy work to lead one to such a state, for the heart of man is deceitful above all things. Although many times a believer says with his mouth that he seeks the spiritual life and experience, nine times out of ten he is for himself, for his own fame and glory. It is extremely difficult to find those who are truly seeking to be spiritual. In order to reach this stage, the believer has to pass through much training and scourging from God so that he will come to realize that he has stolen God's glory and has used God's gift for his own self-exaltation. In everything his heart will be shown to have taken the self as the center. Such a believer will feel ashamed of himself; he will feel remorseful and sorrowful about himself. He will realize that such trust in the soul-life will only lead to failure. Since he has passed through a practical judgment before the Lord, he is now willing to ask God's Holy Spirit to annul his soul-life and to fully separate his spirit from his soul. Once the Holy Spirit is given a chance to work, He will surely work. In this way, a believer will be brought out of a state of the spirit and soul in mixture to a state of perfection in the spiritual life.

Source:

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