

# The Word of God Divides Between Soul and Spirit

by Zac Poonen

---

*The Word of God divides between soul and spirit, and it's essential to discern between these two to follow God's ways and avoid being deceived.*

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 6:3, Isaiah 55:8-9, Acts 1:5-8, Galatians 1:17-18, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 4:12

**Topics:** "Spirituality", "Discernment"

---

## Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the critical distinction between the soul and spirit as outlined in Hebrews 4:12, illustrating how many Christians today operate from a soulish perspective rather than being led by the Holy Spirit. He explains that the old covenant's inability to discern this difference leads to a reliance on human methods in ministry, which can result in confusion and a lack of God's glory. Poonen warns against the dangers of soulish Christianity, where emotions and human ideas overshadow true spiritual power, urging believers to allow the Word of God to reveal the true nature of their service. He highlights the importance of aligning with God's ways rather than human understanding, using biblical examples to illustrate the necessity of spiritual discernment. Ultimately, he calls for a return to the Word of God to guide believers in distinguishing between soulish and spiritual living.

---

## Transcript

In Hebrews 4:12, we read "The Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

The word of God divides between soul and spirit (4:12). The division of soul and spirit will reveal whether we are depending on our soul (mind and emotions) to get God's Word across to people, or upon the Holy Spirit. People under the old covenant could not distinguish between soul and spirit.

The old covenant tabernacle had three parts - outer court, holy place and most holy place. This was a picture of man's body, soul and spirit (1 Thess.5:23). The soul was represented by the Holy Place and the spirit by the Most Holy Place. God's presence was in the Most Holy Place. There was a thick veil between the holy Place and the Most Holy Place. No man was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place (except the high-priest once a year). This was to symbolically teach that man could not live or serve God "in the spirit" under the old covenant. So the Israelites were not able to distinguish between what was soulish and what

was spiritual. Those who still cannot distinguish the difference between these two are living as old covenant Christians.

The word of God will show you what is soulish and what is spiritual. A lot of so-called "Christian" work today is soulish. Soulish work is based on human ideas of serving God. They may be good ideas that are not evil or carnal. But they are human and soulish. There are three types of Christians. Carnal Christians are those who are born again but who still enjoy "limited" amounts of sinful pleasure and who love money, etc. Then there are soulish Christians who have given up all of that, but who still live in their intellect and their emotions. Then there are spiritual Christians who seek to be led by the Holy Spirit in all that they do.

Soulish Christians may be good people who are eager to witness and serve the Lord. But their way of doing all of this is very human. They don't understand God's ways. God says, "My ways are not your ways. As the heaven is higher than the earth, so My ways are above your ways" (Isa.55:8,9). There are human methods by which we can try and reach lost souls, and human methods of serving God. David once transported the ark of God on a bullock cart - the way the Philistines once did it (2 Sam.6:3; 1 Sam.6:11). That was a good idea - to save the Kohathites from the burden of carrying it on their shoulders for that long journey. But that was not God's way - and that was why God brought judgment on the way.

Whenever Christians adopt a human way of doing God's work, there will be confusion. There may be external results that are impressive. But the glory of God will be absent. Moses made the tabernacle exactly like God told him. He did not build it, as he had studied in the academies in Egypt, where they learnt how to build the massive pyramids. Moses had to give up his human understanding of how to build God's house. That was one reason why God had to take him into the wilderness for 40 years - to get rid of his human wisdom. That was why God took Paul to Arabia for 3 years to get rid of the human ideas he had got from Gamaliel's Bible-school during the 3 years he studied there (Gal.1:17,18). He had to pour out his soulish understanding to death before He could understand God's ways.

Soul also refers to human power - where we depend on human resources. We can imagine that we can do God's work better if we have many electronic gadgets and we have political influence. That is a deception. It is the power of the Holy Spirit by which God's work can be accomplished. The early apostles did not have money, gadgets, or influence. Their human resources were about zero. But they accomplished much more than Christians today accomplish with all their gadgets, money and influence. The apostles had spiritual power - not soul power.

We must divide between soul and spirit if we are to become truly spiritual. I have been to many meetings where they claim that the Holy Spirit is moving just because there is a lot of emotion and noise. But I am not fooled. I can see clearly that it is merely the working up of the human soul, and not the working of the Holy Spirit. What they call "the baptism in the Holy Spirit" is only a "baptism of their soul-power". Jesus does genuinely baptize Christians in the Holy Spirit even today. But that brings spiritual power to be a witness for Christ (Acts 1:5,8). Soul-power however only stirs up one's emotions. But most Christians have no discernment on this matter and so they are deceived.

They speak in "tongues" in some non-Christian prayer meetings as well, and whip up their emotions and claim to "come to an inner rest"! Many religions indulge in the whipping up of human soul-power.

If we don't discern between soul and spirit in these days, we will be thoroughly deceived. A lot of "healing" that is being done in Jesus' Name today is also through the power of the human soul and not through a genuine gift of the Holy Spirit. An "atmosphere" is built up in the meeting with a lot of singing. People's

emotions are whipped up, by singing songs like "Lord, I believe," numerous times. Then people are asked to "release their faith"!! This has nothing to do with God. The preacher is just hypnotising the people. Jesus and the apostles never healed people like that. They healed the sick quietly, without any singing or emotion.

If you don't recognise this counterfeit, you may even try to copy it, imagining that this is the way to serve God. And then you may go and manifest your soul power in similar ways to others and deceive them and yourself. So allow the word of God to penetrate within you and to show you what is soulish and what is spiritual. If you look at Jesus, you will find the answer in Him. If you ever attend a healing meeting or watch it on Christian TV, just ask yourself if this is how Jesus did it. You will discover the truth straightaway. But if you neglect the word of God, then you will certainly be deceived. Let the word of God divide between soul and spirit. God has given us His word and the example of Jesus and of the apostles to show us what true spirituality really is.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/the-word-of-god-divides-between-soul-and-spirit/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**