

Dealing with the Soul

Scripture Reading: Rom. 12:2; Phil. 2:13; Matt. 10:37-39

- I. **Our soul, which is our very self, is of three parts—the mind, the will, and the emotion—Prov. 2:10; Job 7:15; S. S. 1:7.**
- II. **Dealing with the mind—Rom. 12:2; 8:6; Eph. 4:17, 23:**
 - A. We need the understanding in our mind to interpret what is in our spirit.
 - B. It is for this reason that Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind”:
 1. The age is the present, or modern, course of this world; to be conformed to this age means that we are modern, following the present course of the world.
 2. If we are occupied by the things of this age, our mind can never be renewed.
 3. There should be a change in our thoughts toward almost everything; we need Christ to spread into the inward parts of the soul and saturate them with Himself; then the image of Christ will be reflected in our thoughts.
- III. **Dealing with the will—John 7:17; James 4:7; Phil. 2:13:**
 - A. We may understand with our mind, but we may not obey with the will.
 - B. The will must be wholly submissive and even in harmony with the will of God—Luke 22:42; James 4:7; Phil. 2:13.
 - C. When our will is dealt with to such an extent, it will be transformed; it will be saturated with Christ as our life by the spreading of the Holy Spirit, and every decision that we make will be an expression of Christ.
- IV. **Dealing with the emotion—Matthew 10:37-39:**
 - A. Our emotion must be under the control of the Holy Spirit; this is why Matthew 10:37-39 exhorts us to love the Lord more than everything else.
 - B. We have to love everything under the control of the Lord with His pleasure, and we must exercise our emotion according to the Lord’s emotion.
 - C. If our emotion is kept under the rule of the Lord with His pleasure and joy, it will be saturated with the spirit; then we will be transformed into the image of the Lord—2 Cor. 3:18.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

DEALING WITH THE MIND

With the intuition in our spirit, we need the mind. The intuition gives the sense of the inner knowledge. But to sense the spiritual things is one thing, and to understand them is another. The things of God are sensed in the spirit, but they are understood in the mind. Many times we know something of God within our spirit, but due to the problem of our mind we do not understand it. Sometimes it may take two or three weeks or even months before we are able to understand what we sense in our spirit. We are aware of something, but we cannot interpret it. We need the understanding in our mind to interpret what is in our spirit. The things of God are sensed by the function of the intuition in our spirit, but they are understood by the function of the understanding in our mentality.

It is for this reason we are told in Romans 12:2 that we need the renewing of the mind. But this verse first says that we are not to be fashioned according to this age. The word *world* used in the King James Version means “age” according to the Greek text, and *age* here in the Greek is

equivalent to the English word *modern*. The age is the present, or modern, course of this world. The world's history is divided into successive ages, such as the first century, the second century, and so forth. We could say that each century is an age. Without the ages, the world could not exist. Today's age is that part of the world's system presently surrounding us, so to be conformed to this age means that we are modern, following the present course of the world.

The verse goes on to say, "But be transformed by the renewing of the mind." If we are occupied by the things of this age, our mind can never be renewed. This is why many Christians who are really saved cannot understand spiritual things. They have become too modern. We have to give up this modern age. If we are conformed to this age, we can never be transformed by the renewing of the mind.

Since the mind is a part of the soul, it is in the soul that transformation takes place. We have been regenerated in the spirit, but now the problem is the soul. There is no doubt about our regeneration, because the Lord is within us as our eternal life, and the Holy Spirit is dwelling in our spirit. Our spirit has been made alive and regenerated with Christ as life by the Holy Spirit. But what about our soul? What about our mind, our will, and our emotion? In our spirit we are entirely different from the people of the world, but I am afraid that in our mind, will, and emotion we are still exactly the same. Regeneration has been accomplished in our spirit, but after regeneration, we still need the transformation in the soul.

Let us illustrate this by a few instances. What about our clothing? Many who are saved are just like the people of the world in their thinking about fashion. They dress in conformity to this modern age. They think that as long as it is not sinful, it is quite all right, but this is merely the human thought and the natural concept. If they would be transformed by the renewing of their mind, their thoughts about their manner of dress would change.

And what about our spending? Has the way that we use our money been changed? I know the story of many Christians. After they are saved, they continue to use their money in much the same way as those in the world. Not until they love the Lord more and give the Lord more ground to work within them will they be transformed in their way of spending money.

In the same way, there are many young brothers studying in the colleges who have the same thoughts about their studies and their degrees as other worldly young people. But if they would give ground to the Lord and be transformed in the soul by the renewing of their mind, their mind would be changed about these matters. This does not mean that they would give up their studies but that their thoughts and concepts about their studies would be entirely different. They would have another point of view from which to evaluate their studies and their degrees.

There should be a change in our thoughts toward almost everything. What is this change in our thoughts? It is the transformation of our soul by the renewing of our mind. We have Christ as life within our spirit, but now we need Christ to spread into the inward parts of the soul and saturate them with Himself. This will transform our soul into His very image. The image of Christ will then be reflected in our thoughts. In whatever we think and consider, our renewed mind will express the glorious image of Christ. The understanding of our mind will then be spiritual. It will be very easy for the mind to understand the things that we sense in our spirit.

The proper translation of Romans 8:6 is, "To set the mind on the spirit is life and peace," or "The mind set on the spirit is life and peace." In Romans 7 the mind is attempting to do things by its own independent effort; thus, it is always defeated. But in Romans 8 the mind cooperates with the spirit and is set on the spirit. The mind has found another law, which is more powerful and stronger than the law of sin mentioned in chapter 7. This new law is the law of life of the indwelling Christ in our spirit. The mind never again attempts to do things independently but sets itself on the spirit, which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The mind is set on the spirit, not on the

flesh. It is one thing to renew the mind, and another to set the mind upon the spirit and stand and cooperate with the spirit. The more our mind stands with our spirit, the more it will come under the control of our spirit.

Because our mind stands with the spirit, the spirit will rule over the mind, saturate the mind, and become the spirit of our mind. Romans 8:6 says, "The mind of the spirit" (lit.), but Ephesians 4:23 says, "The spirit of your mind." When the spirit controls and saturates the mind, the spirit becomes the spirit of the mind. Let us consider the context of Ephesians 4:23. Verse 22 states that we must put off the old man, and verse 24 says that we must put on the new man. This is the work of the cross and resurrection. The putting off of the old man is the work of the cross, and the putting on of the new man is the work of resurrection. Between the work of the cross and the work of resurrection is verse 23: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind." The renewing of the mind includes the work of the cross with resurrection. It means that our natural mind must be crossed out and renewed in resurrection. The death of the cross is not the end but a process leading to an end, which is resurrection. The more we die by the cross, the more we will be resurrected. The negative things will not only be put to an end, but the way will also be opened for the positive. Death to the natural mind leads to a resurrected mind. We will then have a renewed mind in resurrection. This renewed mind is in the spirit and under the control of the spirit; it is filled with the spirit and full of the spirit. Hence, the spirit becomes the spirit of the mind. Then our mind will not only be a renewed mind but also a spiritual mind with spiritual understanding. It is easy for such a spiritual mind to interpret the spiritual things sensed by our intuition.

DEALING WITH THE WILL

Suppose our renewed mind understands what we sense by the intuition. Then the issue is our willingness to obey what we understand. We may understand, but we may also say no. To obey with the will is another problem. Actually, if we do not have an obedient will, it is difficult to understand what is in the intuition. The Lord is very wise; He never does anything wastefully. If He knows that we have no willingness to obey, there is no need for us to receive the understanding. He will just leave us in darkness. Why should He allow us to understand if we will not obey? The understanding must be backed by an obedient will, ready to obey the Lord (John 7:17). When we are ready to obey, we will be able to understand.

For example, some have come to me with questions but without a heart to listen and understand. I realized that it would just be a waste of time to talk with them. Sometimes I asked, "Do you really mean business? If I answer your question, would you obey?" Their answer would usually be, "Well, maybe, but I may not like to do it. I just want to study and find out what is what." The will must be wholly submissive, and not only submissive but in harmony with the will of God (Luke 22:42; James 4:7; Phil. 2:13).

God created us with a free will. He never forces us to do anything but always gives us the option to choose. Although He is great and wise, yet He will never force us. If He were to use force, it would mean that He is really small. Satan not only forces people but even seduces them. But God would never do that. God says, in effect, "If you like it, do it; if you don't, don't. If you love Me, just do it. If you don't love Me, forget it. Go your own way." Thus, there is the need to exercise our will; otherwise, it is difficult for God to do anything. In order to exercise our will, we must make our will submissive and ready to obey all the time. We should not only submit ourselves to the will of God but also bring our will into harmony with His.

When our will is dealt with to such an extent, it will be transformed. It will be saturated with Christ as our life by the spreading of the Holy Spirit. Others will sense the savor and the very image of Christ in our will. Every decision that we make will be an expression of Christ. This is not

a supposition nor just a doctrine. Sometimes when we meet some dear ones in the Lord, we sense the savor of Christ in whatever they say, whatever they choose, and whatever they decide. This simply proves that they have been saturated with Christ by being transformed in their will and in their mind.

DEALING WITH THE EMOTION

The last dealing of the soul is with our troublesome emotion. As we all know, nearly all our troubles are related to the emotion. It must be under the control of the Holy Spirit. This is why Matthew 10:37-39 exhorts us to love the Lord more than everything else. What the Lord does not allow, we should not love. The regulating of our love under the control of the Lord is the negative side. But we must also know the positive side, of always being ready to exercise our emotion according to the Lord's pleasure. Many, many times our emotions have the Lord's permission but not His pleasure. He allows us to love something, but He is not pleased.

A sister once found herself in such a situation. She knew that the Lord allowed her emotion to do certain things, but she realized that the Lord was not happy. She went back to the Lord and said, "Lord, even though You have permitted this, yet I will not do it. I realize that You are not happy." This is very good. She received sweet fellowship and was full of peace and joy. She learned the lesson of bringing her emotion entirely under the control of the Lord and His pleasure. Sometimes we can get the Lord's permission to love something, but not His joy. The more we love it, the more we lack the joy. Finally, it becomes a suffering, not an enjoyment. This proves that we are wrong in our emotion. We all must learn to deal with our emotion according to the pleasure and joy of the Lord. If we do not sense the joy of the Lord in what we are seeking, we must not love it.

Many have heard messages from Matthew 10:37-39, exhorting them not to love their parents, their brothers and sisters, and themselves more than the Lord, but they cannot understand what this means. It simply means that they have to love everything under the control of the Lord with His pleasure. The Lord is not so small, nor is He so cruel, but we must learn that whatever we hate or love, whatever we like or dislike, must be done under the permission of the Lord with His joy. We must exercise our emotion according to the Lord's emotion. When our emotion is not under His emotion, we are wrong and can never have His joy. The more we go our own way, the more we will lose our joy. We cannot have the sweet, tender, and deep fellowship with the Lord. Although no one can condemn us that we are wrong, and we can even claim before others that we have received the Lord's permission, yet we realize that it is without His joy.

If our emotion is kept under the rule of the Lord with His pleasure and joy, it will be saturated with the spirit. We will then be transformed into the very image of the Lord from one stage of glory into another. (*The Economy of God*, pp. 83-89)

References and Further Reading:

1. *The Economy of God*, ch. 9.