



Functions of the Word of God

November 11, 2020

To Operate Within the Believers to Divide Soul and Spirit and to Discern the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart

1 Thessalonians 5:23 And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.

2 Timothy 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

Three Parts

1 Thessalonians 5:23 strongly indicates that man is of three parts: spirit, soul, and body. The spirit as our inmost part is the inner organ, possessing God-consciousness, that we may contact God (John 4:24; Rom. 1:9). The soul is our very self (cf. Matt. 16:26; Luke 9:25), a medium between our spirit and our body, possessing self-consciousness, that we may have our personality. The body as our external part is the outer organ, possessing world-consciousness, that we may contact the material world.

Dividing of Soul and Spirit

The verses in Hebrews 4 describe the children of Israel as falling away from entering into the rest of the good land. With them there were three places: 1) Egypt, from which they were delivered; 2) the wilderness, in which they wandered; 3) Canaan, into which they entered. Their history in these three places signifies the three stages of their participation in God's full salvation.

This is a type of us, the New Testament believers, in our participation in the full

salvation of God. In the first stage we receive Christ and are redeemed and delivered from the world. In the second stage we become wanderers in following the Lord; our wandering always takes place in our soul. In the third stage we partake of and enjoy Christ in a full way; this is experienced in our spirit. When we pursue the pleasures of material and sinful things, we are in the world, typified by Egypt. When we wander in our soul, we are in the wilderness. When we enjoy Christ in our spirit, we are in Canaan. When the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, they were always murmuring, reasoning, and chiding. This surely took place in their soul, not in their spirit. But Caleb and Joshua believed in the word of God, obeyed the Lord, and pressed toward the goal. This surely took place not in their soul but in their spirit.

At that time the receivers of this book, the Hebrew believers, were wondering what they should do with their old Hebrew religion. This wondering in their mind was a wandering in their soul, not an experience of Christ in their spirit. So the writer of this book said that the word of God, i.e., what was quoted from the Old Testament, could pierce into their wondering like a sharp two-edged sword and divide their soul from their spirit. As the marrow is concealed deep in the joints, so the spirit is deep in the soul. The dividing of the marrow from the joints requires mainly the breaking of the joints. In the same principle, the dividing of the spirit from the soul requires the breaking of the soul. The Hebrew believers' soul, with its wondering mind, its doubting concerning God's way of salvation, and its considering of its own interests, had to be broken by the living, operative, and piercing word of God that their spirit might be divided from their soul.

Our soul is our very self (Matt. 16:25; cf. Luke 9:25). In following the Lord we must deny our soul, our very self (Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23). Our spirit is the deepest part of our being, a spiritual organ with which we contact God (John 4:24; Rom. 1:9). It is in our spirit that we are regenerated (John 3:6). It is in our spirit that the Holy Spirit dwells and works (Rom. 8:16). It is in our spirit that we enjoy Christ and His grace (2 Tim. 4:22; Gal. 6:18). Hence, the writer of this book advised the Hebrew believers not to stagger in the wandering of their soul, which soul they had to deny, but to press on into their spirit to partake of and enjoy the heavenly Christ that they might participate in the kingdom rest of His reign in the millennium. If they staggered in the wandering of their soul, they would miss God's goal and suffer the loss of the full enjoyment of Christ and the kingdom rest.

Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart

Our spirit is the organ with which we contact God (John 4:24), while our heart is the organ with which we love God (Mark 12:30). Our spirit contacts, receives, contains, and experiences God. However, this requires that our heart love God first. Our soul is of three parts — mind, will, and emotion; and our spirit too is of three parts — conscience, fellowship, and intuition. Our heart is not separate from our soul and spirit but is a composition of all the parts of our soul, plus the conscience, a part of our spirit. Hence, in our heart is the mind, with the thoughts, and the will, with the intentions. The thoughts affect the intentions, and the intentions carry out the thoughts. The living word of God is able to discern the thoughts in our mind and the intentions in our will.