

# Journey Through the Bible

## A New Heart and a New Spirit

### Message 10: A NEW SPIRIT (5): Discerning Our Spirit from Our Soul

#### Outline:

- I. **According to the Bible, man is a tripartite being composed of a spirit, a soul, and a body (1 Thes. 5:23); Hebrews 4:12 speaks of joints and marrow, which are parts of the body; it also speaks of the soul and the spirit—v. 12, footnote 2:**
  - A. The spirit is concealed in the soul just as marrow is concealed in the joints—v. 12:
    1. To discern our spirit from our soul, we must know where our spirit is, that is, within our soul.
    2. To discern our spirit from our soul, we need to see the position and situation of our spirit.
  - B. The soul needs to be broken so that the spirit may be divided from it, just as the joints need to be broken so that the marrow may be divided from them:
    1. If we let our soul remain whole, there is no possibility for our spirit to be divided from it.
    2. To discern the spirit means not only to realize the difference between the spirit and the soul but also to divide the spirit from the soul; thus, there is the need of the breaking of the soul.
- II. **The composition of our soul—our mind, emotion, and will—needs to be denied—Matt. 16:24:**
  - A. The denial of our mind, emotion, and will is the denial of our self—v. 24, 26.
  - B. When we set our mind not on the things of God but on the things of men, our mind grasps the opportunity to act and express itself; this was what happened with Peter—v. 23.
  - C. Hence, the Lord's subsequent word indicated that Peter had to deny himself, that is, not save his soul-life but lose it—vv. 24-26.
- III. **The living and operative word of God exposes and discerns the thoughts of our mind, the intentions of our will, and the desires of our emotion—Heb. 4:12:**
  - A. Because the word of God exposes our inner situation, it discerns our entire inner situation; this is because the word of God is living and operative; living refers to the nature of God's word, and operative refers to the function of the word.
  - B. All the saints need to understand why Paul mentions the word of God for the dividing of our spirit from our soul—every time God speaks to us, His word always exposes and discerns our inner situation.
  - C. Hebrews 4:12 is related to God's speaking to the children of Israel in which He charged them to go on directly into the good land; what God spoke to them exposed their inner situation and made their inner situation clear to them:
    1. The children of Israel were absolutely in their soul; they were considering how tall and strong the Canaanites were and how weak they were—Num. 13:31—14:2; cf. Heb. 4:2.
    2. They did not exercise their spirit like Joshua and Caleb did; Joshua and Caleb did not remain in their soul; the Bible says that they had

a different spirit (Num. 14:24, 30); they were exercising their spirit, so they had faith.

- D. Every time we read the Bible in a living way, the word always either requires or demands something of us; this requiring word always exposes and discerns our inner situation so that we know whether we are in the soul or in the spirit.
- E. In order to discern our spirit, we need to receive the living word; the more we pray-read the word, the more it becomes living to us; this living word shows us where we are, in the spirit or in the soul—Eph. 6:17-18.

**IV. After the breaking of our soul—the denial of our mind, emotion, and will—whatever is left is the spirit:**

- A. If the unbelievers denied the mind, emotion, and will, nothing would be left; but the more the believers deny the mind, emotion, and will, the more their spirit will rise up and stand up.
- B. In order to know the spirit, we need to let our soul be broken to the uttermost by denying our mind, emotion, and will; then whatever is left is the spirit; this is the way to discern the spirit.

**Focus: We need to discern our spirit from our soul and allow our soul and our spirit to be divided by contacting and receiving God's living and operative word.**

**READING EXCERPT**

Hebrews 4:12 shows that the spirit is concealed in the soul just as the marrow is concealed in the joints. Our spirit is like the marrow, and our soul is like the joints. In other words, our spirit is altogether wrapped up, enveloped, in our soul. The soul is the envelope that hides our spirit. So to discern our spirit from our soul, we must know where our spirit is. It is within our soul. Here we can also see the situation of our spirit. Our spirit is surrounded, enclosed, by our soul. To discern our spirit from our soul, we need to see the position and situation of our spirit.

If the joints are not broken but are whole, the marrow can never be divided from the joints. In order to divide the marrow from the joints, we have to break the joints. This shows that without our soul being broken, our spirit can never be separated from our soul. In order for the contents to be divided from its cover, its wrapping, the cover must be broken. This is basic. Our soul must be broken. If we let our soul remain whole, there is no possibility for our spirit to be divided from it. To discern the spirit means not only to realize the difference between the spirit and the soul but also to divide the spirit from the soul. Thus, there is the need of the breaking of the soul.

The soul is composed of the mind, emotion, and will. All these components of the soul need to be denied. We should not give any ground to our mind, our emotion, or our will. They all have to be denied in our spiritual life.

To deny our mind, emotion, and will is to deny ourselves. In Matthew 16:24 the Lord Jesus told us that to follow Him we need to deny ourselves. Matthew 16:26 compared with Luke 9:25 shows that our soul, our soulish life, is our self. The soul is the self. Thus, to deny the contents of the soul—the mind, emotion, and will— is to deny the self. Here we have to see that the denial is the breaking. To deny the mind, emotion, and will of our soul is to let the soul be broken. The real breaking of the soul is the denial of the self.

By the context of Hebrews 4:12, we can see that the living and operative word of God exposes and discerns the thoughts of our mind, the intentions of our will, and the desires of our emotion. Because the word of God exposes our inner situation, it discerns our entire inner situation. This is because the word of God is living and operative. Living refers to the nature of God's word, and operative refers to the function of the word. The word itself is living, and it operates, functions.

All the saints, including the older ones, need to understand why Paul mentions the word of God for the dividing of our spirit from our soul. This is because every time God speaks to us, His word always exposes and discerns our inner situation. Hebrews 4:12 is mentioned based upon the fact that God spoke to the children of Israel, charging them to go on directly into the good land. What God spoke to them exposed their inner situation and made their inner situation clear to them.

The children of Israel were absolutely in their soul. They were considering how tall and strong the Canaanites were and how weak they were. The Canaanites were giants and big in number, and the children of Israel were small in number. The children of Israel were considering all these things and were afraid of the Canaanites. This consideration, this thinking, was in their soul. Then the word of God exposed and discerned this to show them that they were in their soul. They did not exercise their spirit like Joshua and Caleb did. Joshua and Caleb did not remain in their soul. The Bible says that they had a different spirit (Num. 14:24, 30). They were exercising their spirit, so they had the faith.

Paul compares the staggering Hebrew believers to the children of Israel in ancient times. To Paul's registration the Hebrew believers were staggering. They were not clear what to do—whether to remain in Judaism or to go on in the Christian life. They were in their soul, not in their spirit. So Paul spoke the word of God to them to expose their inner situation and to help them to discern that they were in the soul, not in the spirit.

By this we can see that every time we read the word in the Bible in a living way, the word always either requires or demands something of us. This demanding word, or requiring word, always exposes and discerns our inner situation so that we know whether we are in the soul or in the spirit. To discern our spirit, we need to receive the living word. The more we pray-read the Word, the more it becomes living to us. This living word shows us where we are, in the spirit or in the soul. It is by this that our soul is exposed and our spirit is discerned from our soul. The word of God always shows us our inner position and inner situation. If we are to discern the spirit from the soul, we cannot stay away from the living and operative word of God.

**Questions:**

1. Why do we need our soul broken and what is the real breaking of the soul?
2. Explain how the word of God is living and operative. How can we receive the living word?

## Scripture Reading:

Heb. 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.

Matt. 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

Matt. 16:26 For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?

Luke 9:25 For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world but loses or forfeits himself?

Rom. 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

Rom. 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Rom. 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

1 Cor. 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

1 Cor. 2:14 But a soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually.

1 Cor. 2:15 But the spiritual man discerns all things, but he himself is discerned by no one.