

Earthly, Soulful, Demonic

Our proclamation this morning is 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you [us] completely; and may your [our] whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you [us] is faithful, who also will do it.

We'll carry on from yesterday evening when I did my best to analyze, what I consider to be a problem. This morning I purpose to analyze how the problem arises in terms of Scripture. This is very important because the problem continues to arise. I'll give you five examples of the same problem arising in the last fifty years in the Charismatic movement. I feel that if we can analyze the problem, then the next step is to avoid it. So what I have to say is entirely practical, I hope.

Today I want to deal with the total human personality, and particularly two elements of human personality. If we don't understand ourselves and how we are made up, we have a problem. The total human personality, I believe, is unfolded in the verse that we quoted. "*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify us completely; and may our whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless. . . .*" So completely means our whole spirit, soul, and body.

It says in Genesis chapter 1, that God decided to create man in His own image and in His likeness. That's Genesis 1:26. His image would refer to His outward appearance. There is something in the outward appearance of man that reflects the outward appearance of God. Let me point it out this way—it was appropriate that the Son of God should be manifested in the form of a male human being. He could not have come in the form of an ox or a beetle, because the male human being, in a sense, represents the image or the outward appearance of God.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:7:

For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God . . .

The other phrase that's used in Genesis is not image but likeness. Likeness, I believe, represents the inner structure of the Godhead. The structure of the Godhead is triune—Father, Son, and Spirit. In that likeness man was created a triune being; spirit, soul, and body. So man, in a unique way, represents God to the creation over which God set him as a ruler, in his outward appearance and in his inner composition.

We're not going to deal with the outward appearance, but with the inner structure of human personality which is threefold; spirit, soul, and body. If we go back to the creation we can trace the origin of each. The spirit came from the inbreathed breath of God. When God breathed into Adam, that produced spirit in Adam. Incidentally, the words for spirit and breath are the same both in Hebrew and in Greek. The body was clay, infused with divine life. The soul came about through the union of spirit and body. The soul is the part that's difficult to understand. It is the unique individual ego, the thing in each of us that can say, "I will," or "I won't." It's usually defined as consisting of the will, the emotions and the intellect. So, very simply these are expressed or represented in three verbal statements, "I want, I think, I feel." That's the nature of the soul. Those who are separated from God by sin are dominated by their soul. You'll find if you analyze it, that the life and actions of the natural man are controlled by those three things—I want, I think, I feel.

Now, let's consider what happened to Adam and Eve through the fall. First of all, the spirit died. God said in Genesis 2:17 to Adam:

“ . . . the day that you eat of the tree, you shall die.”

Adam did not die physically for more than 900 years, but he died spiritually the moment he disobeyed God. At the same time, Adam's soul became a rebel. We have to bear in mind that every descendant of Adam, male or female, has in him or her the nature of a rebel. That is our biggest single problem. For that reason it is not sufficient merely have our sins forgiven, though that is wonderful. But, the rebel has to be put to death, and that is part of the provision of the gospel.

Let me just look at two passages in Ephesians which deal with both of these conditions; the death of the spirit and the rebellion of the soul. In Ephesians 2:1–3 speaking to believers who have come alive in Christ, Paul says:

And you He made alive, who once were dead in trespasses and sins, [They were not physically dead, but they were spiritually dead in trespasses and sins and it was the new birth that bought them back to life. Then it says about those sins,] in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, [that's Satan] the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all [and that includes the Apostle Paul] once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the

desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

That's a picture of the whole human race in rebellion against God. And, because of the rebellion, dead in trespasses and sins. That is the outcome of sin. The spirit dies, the soul becomes a rebel in rebellion against its creator. What happens to the body? It becomes, what the Bible calls, corruptible. That means it's subject to sickness, aging, and ultimately death. But as I pointed out, the death of Adam did not take place physically for more than 900 years. The death that Adam experienced when he disobeyed God was probably what the Bible would call, the first death.

Then the New Testament speaks of the second death—Revelation 20:6,14, which I believe is the final separation of the rebellious spirit and soul from God forever.

Now, what happens when we get saved? To our spirit, it's made alive. We have become alive again in Christ. Let me read Ephesians 2:4–6.

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

So God made us alive. That's not all that He did. We do not have time to analyze this, but He also resurrected us and then He enthroned us. All that is put in the past tense, so if we can accept it, spiritually we are seated with Christ upon the throne. But the thing that I want to emphasize now is we have been made alive.

Now the soul through repentance is reconciled to God. It's very important to emphasize repentance. A rebel cannot be reconciled to God as long as he remains a rebel. So one of the things that's involved in salvation is that we lay down our rebellion. Lot's of people who claim to be born again and saved, have in actual fact never renounced their rebellion. They have an outward form of Christianity, but the inner reality is not there.

Let's look now in Romans 5:1:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, We were at war with God? Now we've been justified by faith. We have peace with God. Then in verse 11 it says, And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. We were at war with God. We have been reconciled.

Then, what happens to the body through salvation? It becomes a temple for the Holy Spirit. I think this is very important. A lot of believers do not realize that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and that we have to treat them with reverence. In 1 Corinthians 6:19,20, Paul begins, "*Do you not know . . . ?*" a phrase that he must use at least half a dozen times. My observation is that every time Paul says, "*Do you not know,*" most Christians do not know. So this is what Paul says:

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body . . .

Let's sum up what happens at salvation. Our spirit is made alive, our soul is reconciled with God, and our body is made a temple for the Holy Spirit and also becomes eligible for the first resurrection. In Philippians 3:10–11, Paul says that our body is made eligible for the first resurrection and that this is the goal of his Christian life. This is what he says:

that I may know Him [that is Jesus] and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

The word used there means the "out resurrection," that is not the final complete resurrection, but the resurrection which is only of true believers. I'm always impressed by the fact that Paul did not take it for granted. He said, "My purpose is so to live that I may qualify for the first resurrection." I really do not believe we can take it for granted. It depends on how we live.

Now, what are the functions of these three elements? First of all the spirit. The spirit is capable of direct communion with God and worship. It's the part of man that originated from God and can return to God in fellowship and worship. This is stated in 1 Corinthians 6:17, a very important verse.

But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

In my opinion it would be completely incorrect to say one soul. It is one spirit. If you take that in the context, Paul is talking about a man

being joined to a prostitute, and he says, "That's a physical union." But what he is talking about is a spiritual union. If you take that picture it becomes clear that it is a very real union. But it's only the spirit that can be united with God. The soul cannot. The body cannot. Because of that, the spirit and the spirit alone, I believe, is capable of true worship.

In John 4:23–24 Jesus says,

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. [That is to me a staggering statement. Almighty God, who created the universe, is looking for people who will worship Him. And then it says,] God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

The spirit is the element in us which is capable of worship. The soul is capable of praise and thanksgiving, but only the spirit, I believe, can offer to God the worship which is acceptable.

What happens to the soul? The soul is the decision making element. Through regeneration, the soul is able to make right decisions. David said in Psalm 103, "Bless the LORD, O my soul. . . ." He was talking to his soul. What part of him was talking to his soul? His spirit. His spirit sensed the need to bless the Lord. But his spirit could not do it until his soul activated his body. So the spirit, in this present creation, moves upon the body through the soul. We'll come back to that in a moment, because the New Testament speaks about a soulful body and a spiritual body.

To take a very crude example, I think the soul is like the gear lever in the car. You sit in the drivers seat, switch on the engine, but to get the car moving you have to use the gear lever. The gear lever is the soul. The spirit is there but it cannot move the car without the soul.

My purpose in all of this is to come to the place where we can distinguish between the spirit and the soul. But that's not easy. In fact, there's only one way we can do it effectively, which we find in Hebrews 4:12:

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Notice the word "even." The word of God is the only instrument which is sensitive enough and sharp enough to penetrate, to divide between soul and spirit. In no other way can we understand the different functions of soul and spirit, and the relationship between them except by the word of God. You cannot rely on your own understanding, your own feelings. They're not reliable. The only reliable discerner is the word of God. But to use the word of God as a discerner, two conditions are set. They are found in Hebrews 5:13–14, where the writer is talking about the difference between mature and immature Christians.

For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. [Those who can only feed on milk are still babies. Then he goes on to say,] But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, [or who are mature] that is, those who by reason of use [but the margin says "practice"] have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

In other words, discernment is not something that we can take for granted. It only comes by practice, and it only comes when we take in the whole counsel of God through His word. If we are living like babies on milk, we do not have the ability to discern. If we have grown beyond that, we still cannot discern unless we practice.

I would like to challenge you and ask you, are you practicing discernment? I think I can say of myself that in a certain measure, I do practice discernment. When I walk into a situation I put up my spiritual antennae, and I ask myself, "What are the spiritual forces at work in this situation." When I listen to a sermon, I not only listen to the words, I try to discern the spirit that is coming through the words. But this only comes by practice. If you just walk around carelessly and casually, you will not have the ability to discern. I believe we need to practice discernment in every situation. I believe discernment should be as regularly a part of our spiritual life as prayer. Otherwise, we'll be in trouble.

Now, I want to talk about the difference between the spiritual and the soulful, which I will illustrate from the diagram which you have available to you that's in your outline. This diagram illustrates the use of two Greek words—the word for spirit and the word for soul. If you look at the diagram you'll see in it we have the Greek and then the English. We have the noun and then the adjective. When you see them in writing the relationship is obvious. Now the Greek word for spirit is pneuma from which we get the English word pneumatic, which is a drill that is operated by air. This is because pneuma means breath, wind and spirit.

Now the adjective (and you should be looking at your diagram) from pneuma is pneumatikos. How do we translate that into English? We

know that pneuma is spirit, obviously the English adjective from pneuma is spiritual. That's right. There's no choice.

Now we come down to the Greek word for soul, and here is the problem. The Greek word for soul is psuche from which we get countless different words like psychological, or psychiatric, or psychosomatic. A psychiatrist is a doctor of the soul, because iatros is the Greek word for doctor. All right, we have psuche and the Greek adjective is psuchikos.

Now, there's no hesitation about the translation of the noun—it's "soul." But what about the adjective? The problem is that English does not have a word "soulful." I believe, therefore, that we have to create a word to translate the Bible correctly. According to my understanding, in German, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian—in all those languages there is a word for "soulful." But English is limping along without the necessary word to convey this very important distinction.

Now I'll take all the places in the New Testament where the word psuchikos or "soulful" is used and I'll try to draw out the difference between spiritual and soulful.

First of all, we will take three cases where the word "soulful" is applied to the physical body, which is perhaps a little hard to understand. I looked at five translations and I found various different words that are used in different versions to translate this word psuchikos. In the original King James they use "natural" or "sensual." In the New King James they also use "natural" or "sensual." But in the margin in the last case they use "worldly." In the New American Standard they use "natural," and in the margin "unspiritual" and finally, "worldly minded." In the New International Version they use "without the spirit," "natural," "unspiritual," and then they use the phrase "follow their natural instinct." You see then, that unless we get behind the English translations, we really cannot grasp this vital distinction between that which is spiritual and that which is soulful.

Now we'll look at the three cases where soulful is applied to the body. In 1 Corinthians 15:44, twice in one verse, and then in verse 46. I've never heard anybody else discuss this, but I'll give you my understanding and you can accept it or reject it as you see fit. But, it's an exciting issue, because Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:44 relating to the resurrection, *It is sown a natural body [that is, a soulful body], it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body [that is, a soulful body], and there is a spiritual body.*

You will notice that there is always the contrast between the soulful and the spiritual. There is a soulful body and there is a spiritual body.

Then in verse 46 Paul says, *However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural [that's soulful], and afterward the spiritual.*

So our present body is soulful; our resurrection body will be spiritual. I understand that means we will no longer need the "gear lever." Our spirit will simply decide where to go, what to say, what to do, and it will happen. It will be a body controlled by the spirit.

We have in Ezekiel chapter 1 a picture of some creatures which could be represented as having spiritual bodies. To me, this is exciting, because in the resurrection we will have a body like Jesus. We will just go where we want. No problems about dealing with the soul. In Ezekiel 1:12 talking about the cherubs, it says,

And each one went straight forward; they went wherever the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went.

So they have spiritual bodies. They just go wherever the spirit wants to go. And in the same passage in verse 20,

Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, because there the spirit went . . .

So this is how I understand it. A spiritual body is a body which is directly motivated and controlled by the spirit. It's like a car in which you just switch on the engine and it goes wherever you want at whatever speed. You don't have to bother with the gear lever.

There are three cases where the word psuchikos is used to a body. No English translation that I know of uses the word soulful. Consequently the distinction is obscured.

Now let's look at the other places where the word psuchikos is used. Here we come to a point where there is a clear conflict between the soulful and the spiritual. 1 Corinthians 2:14–15:

But the natural man [the soulful man] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know

them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.

So the soulful man is not in harmony with the spirit. He cannot receive the things of the spirit. He cannot understand them. You can talk to the most highly educated intellects and they have no ability whatever to understand the things of the spirit, because they are operating in the realm of the soul. This is important because it brings out, there is in a certain sense, an opposition between the spiritual and the soulful.

Then we go on to the Epistle of Jude verse 19 which is a rather illuminating verse. Talking about people who have made trouble in the church, the New King James says,

These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit [capital S, the Holy Spirit].

But very obviously they are part of the church, because they cause division. So we have in the church both those who are spiritual and those who are soulful.

Then the most significant passage of all is James 3:15, which I will deal with at length. Talking about a certain kind of wisdom, James says,

This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

By now you have arrived at the conclusion that sensual is soulful. So there is a kind of wisdom that is soulful. And there is a decline, descending in three stages. First, earthly; second, soulful; third, demonic. I believe this is the main way in which demons get into the work of God, the people of God, the church of God. It is through this decline from the earthly, to the soulful, to the demonic.

Now, let's consider what's implied. What does it mean to be earthly? For a Christian I believe it means our vision is completely limited to this earth. We cannot see beyond the earth. All we are expecting from God through salvation are things that belong to this life—prosperity, healing, success, power, who knows what. I believe all of that is soulful. I'll take a few examples of people who are not earthly. You can find a whole list of them in Hebrews 11. In fact, you could really sum up the saints of Hebrews 11 as those who are not earthly. Here are just two examples. In Hebrews 11:9–10 speaking about Abraham, it says,

By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Abraham was in the promised land. He knew it was promised to him, but he did not own it and he never lived there as if he owned it. He never bought a house, or built a house. He always lived in a tent which is something movable.

Note the contrast with Lot who separated from Abraham and turned his face toward Sodom. The men of Sodom were sinners before the Lord and exceedingly wicked and Lot went where his face was turned. So the next time you read about Lot, he's not just looking toward Sodom, he's in Sodom and he's living in a house, no longer in a tent. I think Lot, in a sense, is a type of the earthly man of God.

But, Abraham had a vision had a vision which extended beyond time into eternity. He was waiting for a city that he had never seen, but he knew one day it would be his home. I think that is how God expects us to be as Christians. We are not at home in this world. When we become at home in this world, we become soulful.

My second example is Moses in Hebrews 11:27:

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

Let me suggest to you that this is the key to endurance. It's looking beyond time, looking beyond the level of this life where we often will have a very hard time, many frustrations, many disappointments. What will cause us to endure? A vision that takes us beyond time. There are many other examples. These two are just examples. Abraham and Moses are people who were not earthly.

Then there's also a remarkable statement by Paul which we would do well to ponder in 1 Corinthians 15:19:

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. [Or the most to be pitied.]

That's a very remarkable statement. If all our Christian faith provides for us is things in this life, we are pitiable, we are to be pitied. I have to say, and I want to say it graciously, there's a good deal of teaching in the church which only focuses on what God will do for us in this life. Such people often consider themselves prosperous and successful. God considers them pitiable.

This is a very, very basic truth. Christians of previous generations, I would say up to World War I, were basically conscious of this fact—the world is not our home. But since that time, many, many Christians have lost this perception and live as if we really belonged here. Our thoughts and our ambitions and our plans are focused on the things of time. We are earthly.

When we become earthly, what is the next step down? Soulful. What is the essence of the soul? The ego. What is it to be soulful? It's to be egocentric. To be absolutely concerned with "Number One," as they say. The soulful person says, "What's in this for me?" The spiritual person says, "How can I glorify God?" I think you'll agree. I think I'm not being cynical. There is a great deal of soulfulness in the contemporary church, defined this way. Then the soulful opens up for the demonic. When you get into the realm of the soulful you're exposed to the demonic. This, I believe, is primarily what permits demons to infiltrate the people of God, the work of God. A little later I'll give you five examples of what has happened in this century.

Let's consider for a moment two Old Testament patterns of people who moved out of the earthly into the soulful, and from the soulful to the demonic. They were very distinguished people. The first one is Aaron. If you turn to Exodus 32 you will find something that always astonishes me. Here was the anointed and appointed high priest making a golden calf. I want to analyze what it says in Exodus 32:1–10. Moses at this time is up on the mountain. They've not seen him for something like forty days. Exodus 32:1:

Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

The very significant phrase there is, ". . . the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt." They had lost sight of God. They were focusing on human leaders. I believe, almost inevitably, that will lead to idolatry. When we lose our vision of God and focus on God's servants, we're in great danger.

And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me: So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand, and fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" So when Aaron saw it, [this is an amazing description, when Aaron saw his own calf] he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD." To Yahweh or Jehovah. I mean, I find it hard to understand how Aaron could do that. But if Aaron could do it, you and I could do it. We're no better than Aaron. Probably most of us are not of his caliber. Then it says,

Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

That's the essence of idolatry—play. When our worship becomes play, we've moved out of the spiritual into the soulful, and ultimately into the demonic. I don't want to appear critical, but I have to say to my understanding, most of what is called worship in the Charismatic movement is not worship at all. Often it is very self-centered. "God heal me, God bless me, God make me feel good, God do this, and God do that." It is egocentric. It is soulful. Only the spirit can focus directly on God. Much of the music that we have in the church appeals to the soul, stimulates the soul. It's very much the same kind of music as is used in the world to stimulate the soul.

I'm no expert in music, absolutely not at all. I cannot sing a note in tune. But I have a certain sensitivity to the impact of music. Having lived five years in Africa I am aware that certain repetitive themes and rhythms can deaden your sensitivity if you sit under that long enough, especially when it's very loud. You lose the capacity to discern. And in Africa, those rhythms are used to call up demons.

What is amazing about the scene of Israel's idolatry here described, is the total difference between the attitude of the people when God spoke from heaven and their attitude, perhaps, two months later. There had been the most amazing shift. In Exodus 20 when they had a unique revelation from God, such as no other nation has ever had, their response was awe, fear, reverence. In Exodus 20:18–21, after God had pronounced the Ten Commandments from the mountain:

Now all the people witnessed the thundering, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." So

the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.

They were so impressed by the holiness and the majesty of God that they said, "Moses, we can't listen to that voice anymore. Will you please hear for us, and we will listen to what you say to us." Yet in less than two months they had come from that attitude to the place where they wanted a golden calf to worship, where they saw not God but Moses as the person who had brought them out of Egypt.

Paul takes this up in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 10:5–7 speaking about the experiences of Israel when they came out of Egypt. Paul says,

But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."

What had happened? Their physical needs had been met. Their stomachs were full, their bodies were warmly clothed, so what next? Well, let's have a little excitement. Let's play. I'm so concerned when worship becomes play, and today much of it is. Worship has nothing to do with entertainment. Entertainment says, "Excite me, thrill me, satisfy me." That's all for the benefit of the soul. The spirit is excluded.

My second example of the transition from the spiritual to the soulful to the demonic is even more frightening. You'll find it in Leviticus 9:23–10:2. This is a glorious moment. The people had done everything that God required in the form of sacrifices, and when their obedience was complete God sent His glory and burned up the sacrifice on the altar. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people.

Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

A manifest demonstration of God's glory and a fire that actually consumed the sacrifice on the altar. Now the next two verses, the first two verses of the next chapter are some of the most tragic in the Bible.

Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron [Nadab was the eldest son. He was scheduled to become high priest in place of Aaron] each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

The same fire that consumed the sacrifice, burned up the worshipers. What is profane fire? I understand it is fire that is not taken from the altar that God has commanded. What is profane fire in our experience? I would say it's worship in any spirit other than the Holy Spirit. The penalty was death.

We read in Numbers 16:1–35 about an insurrection against Moses in the wilderness. When some of the leaders took 250 censers, filled them with fire and said, "We're just as good as Aaron. We've got just as much right to be priests as he has." Now Moses said, "All right, we'll try this out." He told them to assemble with their censers with fire in them. Then the fire of the Lord came out and consumed 250 men.

The lesson for me is this, you are responsible for what is in your censer. You're responsible for the spirit in which you approach God. I'm not saying that you'll be consumed with fire, but God's judgments are often exemplary. In other words, God did not judge every city where there was homosexuality, as He judged Sodom and Gomorrah. But His judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah was exemplary. It showed forever God's estimate of homosexuality.

Again, when Ananias and Sapphira tried to cheat the Lord with their offering, they both died because they claimed to be giving God more than they actually were. Not everybody who does that dies. I think if that happened there would be fewer people in the church. But God's estimate of it never changes.

Here we have this demonstration of the danger approaching God with what is called, "profane fire"— any spirit that is not the Holy Spirit. This has become so very real to me.

Now, let's turn to Hebrews and see the New Testament application. You know one of our problems is that we often read the Epistles as if they were written to unbelievers. They were not. They were written to Christians. So Hebrews 12:28–29,

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with

reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.

In that passage the NIV uses the word "awe." I ask myself and I ask you, how much awe do you find in the church today? How many meetings do you go to where there is a sense of the awesome presence of God?

When we were in Britain last summer I encountered a minister friend who made this comment. "I meet people who talk about God as if He was someone they had met in the pub." We've got this "buddy-buddy" relationship with Jesus. He does invite us for fellowship, for communion, but we must never, never lose our sense of awe. I think that is the root of the problems we've been talking about.

To go back for a moment to the contemporary spiritual movements I've been describing. I could easily believe that somewhere in the beginning there was a genuine, spontaneous move of the Holy Spirit. Part of what comes out is the Holy Spirit, but has become mixed. Some things are from God, but others are not.

Why? where is the problem? My answer is soulfulness. An undiscerned, downward slide from a focus on God to a focus on self. From objective scriptural truth to subjective personal experience. All too often a sense of awe and reverence for the holiness of God has been replaced by unscriptural frivolity and flippancy. In fact, I would say that flippancy has become an epidemic disease in the contemporary Charismatic movement. If we have been guilty of it, we need to repent. God has convicted me more than once of being flippant. I have confessed it as a sin and repented. We have to set a watch on our tongues.

Charles Finney once commented, "God never uses a jester to search consciences." One characteristic ministry of the Holy Spirit is to convict of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. John 16:8. Where people remain unconvicted of sin we must question whether the Holy Spirit is at work.

Has God provided any protection against this kind of error? Yes. But first we must understand that error primarily attacks the area of the soul, though the spirit may also be affected later. It is the soul, therefore, that must be protected. The protection which God has provided for the soul has one unique and all-sufficient basis; the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. In Matthew 16:24-25,

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "if anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life [literally soul] will lose it, but whoever loses his life [literally his soul] for My sake will find it.

Here is the divine paradox; to save, protect our soul, we must lose it. Before we can follow Jesus there are two preliminary steps. First, we must deny ourself. We must say a resolute and final "No" to our demanding, self-seeking ego. Second, we must take up our cross. We must accept the sentence of death which the cross imposes on us. Taking up our cross is a voluntary decision that each of us must make. God does not forcefully impose the cross upon us. If we do not apply the cross personally in our own life, we leave a door open to demonic influence. There is always the danger that our uncrucified ego will respond to the seductive flatteries of deceiving demons. Pride is the main area in our character which Satan targets, and flattery is the main lever he uses to gain entrance. We must each apply the cross personally to ourselves.

In Galatians 2:20 Paul says,

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live . . ."

We each need to ask, "Is that true of me? Have I really been crucified with Christ or am I still motivated by my soulful ego?"

Many Christians today would feel that this solution is too radical. They would question whether this is the only way to be secure from deception. They tend to regard Paul as some kind of "Super Saint" whom they can never hope to imitate. Paul, however, does not see himself this way. His ministry as an apostle was unique, but his personal relationship with Christ was a pattern for all to follow. In 1 Timothy 1:16 he says,

However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.

So Paul was a pattern for all who would follow.

Again in 1 Corinthians 11:1 he says,

Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

The only alternative to the cross is to put self in the place of Christ, but this is idolatry. It opens the way for evil consequences that invariably follow idolatry. The cross is the heart and center of the Christian faith. Without the cross proclaimed and applied, Christianity is left without a foundation, and its claims are no longer valid. It has become, in fact, a false religion. As such, like all false religions, it's inevitably exposed to demonic infiltration and deception.

So now, having said that much, let me give you five examples of movements within the Charismatic movement that have all gone the same way. In some way or other I have had some kind of association with each of them. Going back to the period just after World War II in Canada, there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Saskatchewan which came to be called "The Latter Rain." It made a very powerful impact and a lot of people went from different areas of North American to Saskatchewan. I would say the essence of this movement was a full restoration of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Later I knew a man who was present at the Full Gospel Business Men in Chicago, a fine Christian. He described what happened to him when he went there. He said the meetings lasted nine hours, and they were so exciting that he didn't even want to get up and go to the bathroom. But what happened? The leader became proud, self-assertive and fell into immorality and thereby discredited the gifts of the Spirit.

Later on from 1957 through 1962 I was a missionary with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Dear people but practically no exercise of spiritual gifts at all. So one day I said to them, "Why don't we ever exercise spiritual gifts?" The answer was the "Latter Rain" had them. In other words, that made it impossible for us. We might go the same way. You see, one of Satan's tactics is to discredit that which is good by its misuse.

Then there was the "Manifested Sons." I'm sure some of you can remember these. They were a very powerful group of men who took the Scripture, "...that all creation is waiting for the manifestation of the Sons of God." They had a really powerful ministry particularly in casting out demons. But in casting out demons they entered into long conversations with demons, and sought revelation from them. I think it's totally wrong ever seek revelation from demons. They ended up with an exaggerated theology which said some of them had already received their resurrection bodies. The next thing that happened was that two of them were killed in an airplane crash. So God said, "Where's your resurrection body now?", but they were fine men at the first.

Then there were the "Children of God." How many of you have heard of the "Children of God?" Later they changed their name to "The Family." A woman named Linda Meisner exercised a powerful ministry among them. I had two or three encounters with her. She was a very dedicated powerful woman, and she had a great burden for the young people of America. But when she was taken over by pride, she became manipulative and dominating. Many of the young people in the "Children of God" came under her control. She cut them off from their relationship with their parents and their families, and it became a disaster. But I believe that when she started, she was right.

Then there was William Branham. I had a little association with William Branham at the closing period of his ministry. I was on the same platform with him two or three times with the Full Gospel Business Men. William Branham had, in some ways, one of the most remarkable ministries that I know of. He was a very gentle, humble, loving man. His ministry of the word of knowledge was absolutely legendary. No one ever heard Branham give one false word of knowledge.

I was with him in a meeting in Phoenix, Arizona. He was on the platform and he picked out a woman in the audience and he said, "Now you're not here for yourself. You're here for your grandson." And then he told her her name and her exact street address in New York City. They were about 2,000 miles away from New York City at the time. Unfortunately, after exercising his gift two or three times, he just collapsed and his men came and gathered him up and carried him away. He explained that by the statement of Jesus, "The power has gone out of me." But Jesus did not collapse. I do not believe that was the Holy Spirit. I believe it was demonic.

Later on I was close friends with Ern Baxter, who was, for quite a considerable period, the Bible teacher in Branham's evangelistic meetings. Ern loved Branham dearly, but his heart was broken over what happened. One day he gathered a small group of us and said, "I want to tell you about Branham. I don't want you to talk to anybody about it. I just want you to know." Now since all the people concerned have passed from the stage of time, I feel free to share what Ern shared about Branham.

He said Branham had two spirits. One was the Spirit of God, one was not. At one point they were together and Branham pointed to a light bulb hanging from the ceiling and said, "The power I have can make that bulb move." I believe Branham remained in Christ to the very end, but he was taken over by people who wanted to exploit him. Although he did not call himself Elijah, he permitted his followers to do so. He was killed through an automobile crash when his car was run into by a drunk driver. His followers embalmed his body to keep it there until Easter Sunday, being convinced that he would be resurrected, but he was not.

When he was in the Spirit under the anointing he was almost unchallengable. At one time a demonized man up to attack him in a meeting. Branham commanded the man to kneel down and stay there until he finished his message. The man stayed kneeling in the same posture for the whole period of Branham's sermon. But I would have to say his end was, perhaps the best you could say, disappointing.

And then we have Discipleship or the Shepherding Movement. Now I was personally closely involved, and I can tell you that it began with a supernatural intervention of God. I was there when it happened. Three other preachers beside my self; Bob Mumford, Charles Simpson, Don Basham and I were all speaking at a convention. In the middle of it we discovered that the man who was leading and organizing the convention was an actively, practicing homosexual. So we thought, "What are we to do about this?" We agreed to meet together in someone's room in the motel, not my room. The four of us knelt down and prayed and when we stood up we all knew, without any process of reasoning, without praying for it, without even wanting it, that God had joined us together. Yet, in spite of that, I don't think the thing went a year before it started to go off.

This is my personal impression. The problem was primarily personal ambition in different forms. One wanted to be the leader of a movement, another wanted to appear on the platform, and so on. And I was one of them. From my experience I would say there is no greater problem in the church today than personal ambition in the ministry. Another problem was that we were not renewed in our minds. We still thought in the "old church" categories. Everybody who disliked us said, "Well, you're really a denomination." Our leader said, "Oh, no. We're not a denomination. We never will be." But the logic of spiritual principles is inexorable. He and his group have become a denomination.

Our root problem was that we were not renewed in our minds. We still thought in terms of the way the church traditionally does things, and I do not believe the church does things right. I believe there has to be a revolution in our thinking before we can line up with God's purposes.

So let me just list these five examples. The Latter Rain, The Manifested Sons, The Children of God, William Branham, and The Discipleship or Shepherding Movement.

Finally, let me point out two elements that were common, I think, to all of these movements. No. 1 – **PRIDE**. Pride is the most dangerous of all sins, in my opinion. I heard a fellow preacher say once, "Pride is the only sin about which the devil will not make you feel guilty." Proverbs 16:18, a very short little verse.

*Pride goes before destruction,
And a haughty spirit before a fall.*

Now you'll notice that people usually say, "Pride goes before a fall." That is not what the Bible says. The Bible says, "Pride goes before destruction." So turn around. Don't continue in that way, because the end of it is destruction. I am talking to myself as much as to you.

The second feature which I believe was common to all five was what I have already spoken about; **A MIXTURE OF SPIRITS**. There was truth and there was error. There was the Holy Spirit and there were other spirits. The way the other spirits got in was through a downward slide from the earthly to the soulful to the demonic. Remember, the soulful is essentially self-centered. In 2 Timothy 3:1–5 Paul describes what the condition of humanity will be like at the close of this age. I believe we are living in that time. He lists 18 sins or moral blemishes.

But know this [and that's the only time that I can recall that Paul was so emphatic. He says, "Now be absolutely sure of this . . .], that in the last days perilous times will come . . .

The Greek word translated "perilous" is only used in one other place, in Matthew 8:28 where it describes two demonized men who came against Jesus. And notice the English word there—fierce. So there are going to be fierce times and they are here. You can pray as much as you like but you cannot change it because God says, "Know this. There will be fierce times." You cannot change it, but you can ask God to prepare you for it. Then Paul give a list of these 18 moral blemishes:

. . . for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without selfcontrol, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

Notice, it begins and ends with the things that people love. Love of self, love of money, and then love of pleasure. But I want to point out to you the root of it all is the love of self. That's what lets evil in. Soulfulness, being focused on me, what is God going to do for me, what do I get out of this? And then it goes on in verse 5,

. . . having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

So these people with these 18 horrible moral conditions have a form of godliness. They are not unbelievers. They are not atheists. I do not believe, myself, that Paul would ever use the word "godliness" outside the Christian context. So these are professing Christians, and what is the problem? Self-love. Selflove is what opens the way to every one of these other problems. Self-centeredness, that leads in turn to mixture.

Just one more thing and we close. The way that mixture works is this. It causes confusion and then division, because some of what is provided is good and some is bad. Some is truth and some is error. This means there are two ways people can respond. Some will focus on the error and reject the truth. Others will focus on the truth and accept the error. Therefore, there comes confusion and out of the confusion, division.

People become aggressively committed to one or other of the alternatives. What causes it? Mixture. We cannot afford to tolerate mixture. What is the answer to mixture? Truth. The pure, undiluted truth of God's word.

It happened once in the USA that I was the only witness to an accident in the street outside our home. As a result I was required to testify in court. Before I gave my testimony, I was required to affirm that I would speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. That was the standard set by a secular court. How much more should we as Christians take our stand for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Article printed from www.derekprince.org at 7:49 PM on Saturday, March 23, 2013