

The Essentials of Mortification: Soul and Spirit

by Paul West

In order to live a life of unbroken communion with God, it is essential to understand the difference between the soul and the spirit and to mortify the soul's harmful impulses.

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Mortification"

Description

Paul West emphasizes the importance of discerning between the soul and the spirit in maintaining unbroken communion with God. He highlights the need for believers to rely on the Word of God to distinguish between the two and to mortify harmful impulses that may arise from the soul. Paul warns against the deception of mistaking soul experiences for true spiritual encounters, stressing the necessity of allowing God to transform the heart for genuine growth in Christ.

Transcript

Would you live this day before the face of God in unbroken communion? Resolve then not to judge the integrity of your relationship with Him by the dictates of soul. If you gauge your communion with Him by the soul, you will invariably receive inaccurate readings and be tempted unto depression. It is essential that a child of God know the difference between the leading of the soul and the voice of the spirit in mortification. As with everything concerning our growth in Jesus Christ, familiarity with the Word of God is a safeguard for the believer. The double-edged blade of Holy Scripture is able to separate soul from spirit, the same way a knife separates the bone from meat when filleting a fish. If we allow God to steadily transform us in matters of heart-purity an eventual awareness between soul and spirit will manifest to our understanding.

The soul is the seat of emotion, intelligence, visceral heightening, of transient pleasure and pain. When unsaved people (and many regenerate people) speak of having a "spiritual" experience, what they usually mean to say is that they had a powerful soul experience. Unbeknownst to them, the soul and spirit are on two different levels. A person might have had a soul experience, while his spirit lay dead in trespasses and sins. The soul reacts to aesthetical stimuli: music, art, touch and taste. The spirit, however, responds exclusively to God's quickening grace. This being said, the soul's weather condition can often be an accurate barometer reading of the spirit's temperature, but this comes with a disclaimer: the soul is within Satan's reach and can be manipulated and commandeered by the enemy to bring a sense of condemnation and dejection to the child of God.

It falls within the Christian's duty, therefore, to detect and mortify certain harmful impulses from the soul. The soul is subject to lust (I Peter 2:11; Revelation 18:14), and finding comfort in the excess of money and material possession (Luke 12:19); yet at the same time soul-prosperity can be of a godly source (III John 2), and of godly fear (Acts 2:43). It is able to be anchored in Christ (Hebrews 6:19) to keep from drifting into uncharted waters. The Christian must be able to identify this drifting and mortify it to the obedience of God.

Like an unruly and idle mind, the unanchored soul is a prime target for Satanic acquisition. The relationship between the soul and spirit is unique, for Satan's great tactic is to usurp the latter with the former. Multitudes of churches are unable to identify this usurpation through their music and preaching. If the spirit is dead in sin, the soul garbed in religiosity can provide a very convincing replacement. Immature believers easily fall for this deception. Praise and worship leaders, for example, will sometimes employ a mantra-like chorus to galvanize the soul, believing they are stirring the spirit unto exhalation. The music and singing will recite the same phrase, steadily building in intensity and volume, until a frenzied atmosphere is achieved. This is almost always the power of soul, and we should be able to recognize this phenomenon and put it to death upon discernment.

Every mature believer in Christ should be able to discern whether his or her emotions are being pandered to and manipulated. It is important to mortify these occurrences in the soul to preserve our sobriety. God rewards sobriety with grace. The spirit usurped by the soul yields no grace to overcome sin and mortify fleshly temptation. The most dynamic preaching and music predicated upon soul will do nothing for you in terms of victory, because they cannot reach beyond the emotional sector of your psyche. Victory over sin belongs to the exclusive realm of spirit which God alone is able to access and quicken.

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