

## THE KINGDOM AND THE SOUL-LIFE

Our soul is also related to the world. The thing that most **hinders our Christian life** is not sin but **the world**. Sin is dreadful and must be condemned. However, **the world is even more destructive and damaging to our Christian life**. More Christians are hindered from going on with the Lord by the world than by sin. **Sin is related to our flesh; the world is related to our soul**. Romans 6:6 tells us that because our old man has been crucified with Christ, the *body of sin* is annulled, or unemployed. Our body has become jobless. Therefore, the matter of sin is related to our body, to our flesh. The world, on the contrary, is connected to our soul. This connection is proved by Matthew 16:26, where the Lord Jesus asked what it would profit a man if he should **gain the whole world but forfeit his soul-life**.

As we have seen, **Satan is in our flesh**, operating for his **kingdom**, and **the Lord Jesus is in our spirit**, operating for the **kingdom of God**. Ephesians 2:2 tells us that Satan, the ruler of the authority of the air, is the spirit that now operates in the sons of disobedience. This word operates is the same word used in Philippians 2:13, which tells us that God is operating in us. So, **there are two operators within us**, one in our flesh and the other in our spirit. Both of these operators are working toward the soul. Satan works from the outside inward, and God works from the inside outward. Both are aiming toward the soul of man, making our soul very strategic. Whether God will have His kingdom or Satan will have his kingdom depends upon our soul. Our soul is strategic for both kingdoms. This is why the Lord Jesus speaks so much in Matthew, Mark, and Luke about taking up the cross in relation to the soul. We must apply the cross to our soul because Satan dwells in our flesh and seeks to control our soul. Our soul has been saturated with Satan himself. Our mind, will, emotion, self, soul-life, and relationship with the world have been saturated and permeated with Satan.

I appreciate the Lord's word in Matthew 10:37-39. The Lord said that anyone who loves parents or children above Him is not worthy of Him. If you **love** your parents or your children more than you love the Lord Jesus, you are finished with Him. Then in Luke 14:26-27 the Lord spoke of **hate**. The Lord said that if anyone comes to Him and fails to hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and even his own soul-life, he cannot be His disciple. These two passages linked together prove that if you are one with Satan, **it makes no difference whether you love or hate**. Our eyes must be opened to see what we are in our soul. In our soul is the kingdom of Satan. Our soul has been fully saturated with Satan and has become his kingdom, his domain.

## BEARING THE CROSS

**God's way to deal with the soul is the cross.** The cross must do its work in us. We have been put on the cross already, but we must **stay** there. To bear the cross means to remain on the cross. The destiny and destination of our soul is the cross. The **good soul** and the **bad soul**, the **loving soul** and the **hating soul**, have been put on the cross. God has put your soul on the cross, and it must remain there. The Lord Jesus first bore the cross and then was crucified on the cross. We, on the contrary, were first crucified on the cross, and now we bear the cross continually. Never get off the cross, for God has put you there. Whenever we come down from the cross, immediately we become one with Satan. We saw in the last chapter that because our mind is a battlefield, we must pray for the Lord to bind the strong man. However, for our emotions, for our loving and hating organ, we must bear the cross. For our mind we must bind the strong man, and for our emotions we must bear the cross.

## CRUCIFYING THE WORLD

Our relationship with the world also requires that we bear the cross. The Bible tells us about a woman who loved the world very much—Lot's wife. The Lord Jesus warned us concerning her, saying, "*Remember Lot's wife*" (Luke 17:32). Lot's wife loved the worldly things in the city of Sodom. Suppose there is a brother who, like Lot's wife, loves the things of the world. If you pray for this brother, saying, "*Lord, bind the strong man,*" it will not work. This will work for a brother who has a strong mind full of opinions, but it will not work for a brother who loves the world. **A brother who loves the world needs to bear the cross.** To deal with our **love of the world in our emotions is not a matter of binding the strong man but of bearing the cross in the soul.** Many of the dear sisters find shopping to be so sweet. Although some people may not have money for shopping, they enjoy window shopping. They love the things of the world. If we remain on the cross, we certainly will not go shopping that much. The soulish love of the world must be crossed out. This kind of love of the world in the soul-life is the satanic kingdom. If this is not crossed out, the Lord Jesus in our spirit will have no way to spread into our emotions. If the sisters love to shop, their emotions will be fully drawn away from the Lord. Many dear sisters have hardly grown one inch in the Lord because they love the worldly things so much. There is no room in their emotions for the Lord Jesus to come in; nearly every bit of ground in their emotions has been occupied by worldly things. If you can easily forget how many worldly possessions you have, that would indicate that you do not love them. However, it is difficult for most sisters to

forget the things that they have. Every sister recalls these things very well. Some sisters do not know how many chapters Matthew has, but they remember very well how many dresses they have. Some may have been Christians for more than twenty years and yet be unable to tell exactly how many chapters there are in the book of Acts. What is occupying your emotions? Where is your love? What is the object of your love? This is a matter of the kingdom of Satan or the kingdom of God. We have used these practical **illustrations** because the Lord has shown us that the kingdom is not merely a dispensation or a sphere. The kingdom is the totality of the Christian life. **It must be practical.**

### REMAINING ON THE CROSS

**All the verses in which the Lord Jesus spoke about the soul are related to the kingdom of God...** It is not simply a matter of being sinful or worldly. It is a matter of whether or not **our soul has been dealt with by the cross** in the matter of love. If we love, our love must first be **crossed out**; if we hate, our hate must be **crossed out**. We need to love and we need to hate, but our love and our hate must first be **crossed out**. All the soul must be dealt with by the cross. The Lord has crossed out our soul already. Galatians 2:20 declares, *"I am crucified with Christ."* Since we have been crucified with Christ, we must remain on the cross. We must stay at the place where we have been already **crossed out**. This means that we must bear the cross and never give any ground to the Satan-saturated soul. We must keep our soul on the cross, especially in the matter of love. If we want to love something or someone, we must love it by having our soul **crossed out**. This is not a theory; this is the practice and practicality of the kingdom life.

### THE MIND, THE SELF, AND SATAN

In Matthew 16 the Lord Jesus rebuked Peter, saying, *"Get behind Me, Satan."* Then the Lord told Peter that his mind was not set on the things of God, but on the things of men. Following this, the Lord Jesus said that those who come after Him must deny the self. By this we can see that Satan, the mind, and the self are three things in one. **Satan is in the mind, and the mind is in the self. The self is in the mind, and the mind is in Satan.** These three are indivisible. It is difficult to separate the self from the mind or the mind from Satan.

**The self is subtle and hidden.** We may think that our concepts are merely concepts and our ideas simply ideas. But actually, our concepts and our ideas are our self. Perhaps we have never realized that our ideas and dissenting thoughts are expressions of the self and that our self is one with Satan. We all need to be crossed-out people, having no

dissenting thoughts or concepts. **It is not a matter of who is right and who is wrong.** Strong concepts are the expression of the self. The self is always one with Satan in the soul, and the self is inevitably expressed in the concepts.

This does not mean that we should no longer have any concepts. We are not a chair or a table. Tables and chairs have no concepts, but as human beings we must have concepts. **We need to have concepts** but everything depends on whether or not the self is contained in the concepts. **Is the self expressed in the concepts?** Although it is true that many concepts are the expression of the self, many times we may have a concept without any trace of self in it. The self has been dealt with. In the leadership and responsibility of the church life, we need to fellowship together about many things. **For example, we need some concepts about what time the meetings should be and on which days they should be held. When we come together to fellowship, we need to speak something. We must understand that it is not a matter of the concept itself, but what is behind or within the concept.** The self that is hidden within the concept must be dealt with, because that self is one with Satan. However, do not take this as an excuse to have many concepts; it is better not to have many concepts. If we continually express our concepts, we will express our self. What kingdom are you in? It all depends on whether or not the soul has been crossed out.

Because we are believers in Christ, we all have the kingdom of God in our spirit, but we also have the kingdom of Satan in our soul. Whatever we have, whatever we are, whatever we can do, and whatever we keep in our soul must be completely dealt with by the cross. It is good to take no thought, but that is only a part. We must realize that whatever we are, whatever we have, and whatever we can do in our soul must be dealt with because the satanic kingdom is in our soul. The more our soul is crossed out, the more opportunities will be afforded to the indwelling Christ to spread Himself from our spirit into our soul. In this way **our soul will be purified and saturated by the Lord Himself.** Then the kingdom of God will increase, spread, and come again within us. This is the way to have the riches of Christ. This is the way to have power and impact and the blessing of the Lord. This is the central and strategic point of our Christian life related to the kingdom of God. Therefore, we all must concentrate our seeking and our attention to this one thing: to bear the cross and always afford the Lord the opportunities to spread Himself from our spirit into our soul. Then we will have **the practicality of the kingdom life.**