

## THE DIVIDING OF THE SPIRIT FROM THE SOUL

### Watchman Nee:

Here the teaching of Hebrews 4:12 becomes crucial. It is there that the Holy Spirit teaches us to experientially divide the soul from the spirit. The dividing of the soul and the spirit is not merely a doctrine; it is an experience which all believers can and must have in their lives. In Hebrews 4 the Holy Spirit relates to us the ministry of the Lord Jesus as the High Priest. It also tells us the relationship between the believers and the High Priest. Verse 12 says, "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." Verse 13 goes on to say, "And there is no creature that is not manifest before Him, but all things are naked and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we are to give our account." The intention of the Holy Spirit here is to show how the Lord Jesus fulfills His work as the High Priest with respect to the believers' soul and spirit. Here the Holy Spirit considers a believer a sacrifice on the altar. In the Old Testament, when a man offered a sacrifice, he tied the sacrifice to the altar. The priest then killed the sacrifice with a knife and cut the sacrifice into two parts with the knife, piercing and dividing even the joints and the marrow. Everything that was inside the sacrifice, that was originally hidden from man's sight and knowledge, then became exposed and laid bare before men. After it was divided, the priest would then burn the sacrifice with fire and offer it to God. The Holy Spirit used this picture to show the Lord Jesus' work in the Christians, and the Christians' experience in the Lord. As the sacrifices of old were divided by the priests so that the joints and marrow were all laid bare and separated into two parts, in the same way the believers are now being divided in their soul and spirit through the word of God by their High Priest, the Lord Jesus. By this, the soul will no longer affect the spirit, and the spirit will no longer be controlled by the soul. Each will be separated from the other, and it will be possible to distinguish what is the soul and what is the spirit. There will not be any confusion or contamination anymore.

The priests of old divided the sacrifices with a knife. The present High Priest, the Lord Jesus, divides the believers' soul and spirit with the word of God. The priest's knife was very quick and sharp and was able to divide the sacrifices into halves; even the joints and marrow (which were so tightly joined together) were pierced through and divided from one another. The word of God, which the Lord Jesus now applies, is sharper than a two-edged sword. As such, it is able to clearly separate the soul from the spirit, which are so intimate within man.

After we examine this passage carefully, we see that it is by two things that a believer's soul and spirit are divided. The first is the cross, and the second is the word of God. The sacrifices had to be laid on the altar before the priests could cut them in half. We know that the altar of the Old Testament is the cross of the New Testament. Unless the believer is willing to come to the foundation of the cross and is willing to be crucified with the Lord, he cannot expect the High Priest to divide his soul from his spirit with God's sharp sword, His word. The laying on the altar comes first; the dividing by the knife comes afterward. A believer must first come to the cross before he can expect the Lord Jesus to fulfill His priestly ministry of dividing his soul from his spirit with His word. Hence, all those believers who desire to experience the dividing of the soul from the spirit need to take heed to the Lord's call to Golgotha. They should lay themselves down unreservedly on the altar, trusting in their High Priest to exercise His sharp sword to divide their soul from their spirit. As those who desire to offer acceptable sacrifices to God, we have to lay on the altar. It is the priest's work to cut with the knife. We should fulfill the requirement on our side and should entrust the rest of our experience to the hand of our faithful and trustworthy High Priest. At the right time, He will give us the full spiritual experience. Now let us consider how He calls us to the cross.