

The Divided Soul

Discovering You:

Romans 7:15 – 8:14

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Occasionally, my family catches me talking to myself. I don't mind that. Frequently, I need a good talking to; and sometimes, I'm the only one who will risk it. What I do mind, what bothers me is when I find that I'm talking to myself as I try to help someone else. The other day I spent a long time on the phone talking to a brick wall. You know what I'm saying? I was listening to an angry, hurting soul, bent on destruction. Anything beyond sympathy aggravated the person. Some of you have experienced this with your teenagers, some with employees or bosses. Finally, I spent every word, and none eased the pain or stirred constructive thinking. Metaphorically, I threw up my hands. All I can do is let this tortured soul know that I love him, and pray. I closed saying, "I really feel bad. It grieves me deeply to see you suffer. I hurt for you. I love you. Please let me pray for you." I thanked God for his deep love and asked him to provide the needed light to heal the hurt and illumine the path of victory and joy. When I finished there was quietness. Something deeper than intellect got through the bricks. I didn't address the man's thoughts, feelings or choices, but something stirred in him that affects them all. If he ignores the stirring, he will destroy much. However, if his heart opens to the Spirit of God, he will find hope and life.

When I hung up the phone, I realized that I had ministered to his spirit. What do I mean? Right now, our church is reading 1 Corinthians together. Last week, we read chapters 3 through 7. While I was in Arkansas, I read these words from chapter one:

God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful. (1 Corinthians 1:9, NIV)

God has called us into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. The thing that changed the first disciples was their fellowship with Jesus. They were drawn to God through their communion with Jesus. The thing that transformed the believers of the 1st Century was their spiritual fellowship with Jesus. They developed a spiritual communion with Jesus that informed their mind, emotions and will with the love and wisdom of God.

God has been opening my eyes to truths in the Scriptures about our nature, and therefore our potential. First, we are trinity. We again look at a diagram to see how we were made spirit, soul and body. The spirit covered the soul and body with the love, wisdom and presence of God. Adam and Eve needed no physical clothes because they were protected from all harm and fear by their relationship with God. Adam and Eve were Spirit-protected and Spirit-led. Their fellowship with God blessed their mind, emotions and will. Their fellowship with God blessed their souls. Their fellowship with God blessed their bodies. They experienced no conflict or division. However, when they sinned, they lost that spiritual covering. Immediately they were in conflict with God, one another and themselves, and they were naked, vulnerable and fearful. They needed protection for their bodies and souls, so they created clothing out of leaves. Having lost fellowship with God, they processed life through their physical senses. We see that in the second diagram. The bodies that host and enable our souls dominate what we think, feel and choose. The mind, emotions and will is still a function of the soul. However, they lack personal knowledge of God because we are dead to God. We died in spirit. Consequently, we live in the flesh. Our body and soul function together, often competitively. We live estranged from God and vulnerable to deception. That is what it means to live according to the flesh.

Absent communication with God, we become increasingly conflicted, divided and guarded. I read recently about a leader whose Christian wife brought him great solace and blessing. He held certain beliefs because he could see their validity in her life. His wife was his link to God. During this time he brought democratic reforms and great blessing to his nation. However, when she died and he suspected poisoning, he increasingly became a divided soul. He married seven times, sometimes divorcing a wife a week after their wedding. In one week, he could easily pass from the most depraved orgies to anguished prayers and fasting in a remote monastery. He grew more suspicious, cruel and mentally volatile, governing his people ruthlessly, spawning genocide. In a fit of rage, he accidentally killed his son that he was grooming to replace him. The first czar of Russia's moniker is appropriate, Ivan the Terrible. St. Paul describes Ivan's torment:

I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate. (Romans 8:15, NLT)

What we witness with Ivan cannot be cured by just a Psychiatrist's prescription.

At West Point's chapel hang 12 marble shields. Each commemorates a famous general from the Revolutionary War. On 11 are the names, dates of birth, ranks and dates of death. On one is 1741 – the date of birth and the rank – Major-General. The name and date of death are missing. The missing general was famous. He led a historic victory, and sacrificed heroically, nearly dying and sustaining a lasting wound. However, he suffered betrayal, disappointment and dishonor from those he served. It ate away at him until he turned away and sold them out. For 20,000 British pounds or 3 million dollars in today's currency, he betrayed his country. When his plot was discovered, his conspirator hanged and he escaped, his memory was expunged, on George Washington's orders, from every military record. Benedict Arnold was a divided soul.

Robert Louis Stephenson was taken with this duality of good and evil existing in one soul. His wife reported:

“In the small hours of one morning” (scholars think she spoke of late September or early October of 1885), “I was awakened by cries of horror from Louis. Thinking he had a nightmare, I woke him. He said angrily, 'Why did you wake me? I was dreaming a fine bogey tale.' I had awakened him at the first transformation scene ...”

She was speaking of the first transformation scene in what would become her husband's famous novel *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In this fictitious story, a benevolent Dr. Henry Jekyll transformed repeatedly into a depraved Mr. Edward Hyde until Dr. Jekyll was overtaken by Mr. Hyde. In his story, the transformation began with a potion. In the Bible, it is sin living in us that makes us slaves to destruction. Sin lives in our souls. It lives in our thoughts, emotions and will. It lies to us and feeds into what we think, feel and choose.

Now there are mental illnesses like *multiple personality disorder* or what now is called *dissociative identity disorder*, but most divided souls are aware of their divisions. Most of us recognize our inner conflict and inconsistency. We identify the battle and hate it.

Victory comes through a spiritual fellowship with Jesus. It is secured by that fellowship.

That **spiritual fellowship begins with forgiveness of sins**. There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus, so *spiritual fellowship begins when we no longer feel condemnation*, when we instead, feel the favor of God. We are born from above, born of the spirit, when being convicted of sin, we taste forgiveness and revel in our peace. When we embrace forgiveness, we come alive spiritually. With our mind and emotions, we taste the love of God, and we begin a fellowship with God where we don't hide. We don't hide because we don't fear condemnation.

We're free now to face sins, to rid ourselves of them rather than justify them. With no condemnation we begin to feel the love of God, and that loves begins to burn in our hearts. That

love informs our minds. It evokes emotion. We begin to love God with our thoughts, feelings and choices more than the pseudo-fulfillments of sin, like the temporary satisfaction of lust, intoxication of power, euphoria of attention, excitement of trinkets, or pretension of security. Without the fear of condemnation, we can get honest. It permits honesty.

Spiritual fellowship begins with forgiveness and **grows when we focus on what our loving Father is saying and doing** among us. If we take the Bible as a set of goals to achieve, we then rely on the flesh. We become tortured and divided souls because we don't have the mind, emotions and will to overcome the sin, for sin deceives our mind, colors our emotions and affects our choices. That is why many people repudiate principles of the Bible. With their souls – their mind, will and emotions, they can't achieve what the Bible teaches. They think the Bible is unreasonable. However, if they begin with forgiveness and realize that Christ is speaking life into them through the Scriptures, that Christ is bringing partners for them in the church, that Christ is orchestrating events for them, they will grow the heart to live the life. They will grow in the peace and joy of walking with God.

Listen to these words of Scripture:

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. (Romans 8:5-9, NASU)

When we are in the Spirit, then we like Jesus relate to God as his child. We begin to trust his word and work in our lives. We appeal to him as his children. We become secure as his children. We live a new life that removes the torment and guilt. Indeed, "he restoreth my soul!"