

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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AND
RISKING
OUR SOUL

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BEING LIKE-SOULED AND RISKING OUR SOUL

In this booklet I would like to give a word on the matters of being like-souled and of risking our soul. Concerning Timothy, Paul says, “I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you” ([Phil. 2:20](#)). Regarding Epaphroditus, he says, “Because for the work of Christ he drew near even unto death, risking his life, that he might fill up your lack of service toward me” ([Phil. 2:30](#)). Without spiritual experience, we cannot have an adequate understanding of Paul’s thought in these verses. Mere reading without experience is not sufficient. Through our experience in the church life and through observation, we have come to understand at least to some extent what Paul means when he speaks of being like-souled and of risking the soul.

THE SOURCE OF DIVISIONS

In order to accomplish something for Christ, we must use our soul. To simply have fellowship with the Lord it is sufficient to exercise our spirit, but to do something for Him we need to

exercise our soul with its faculties. This was the reason God created the soul with the faculties of mind, emotion, and will. Whenever we seek to accomplish something for the Lord, we must use these faculties. However, the serious problem is that when Christians endeavor to do something for the Lord Jesus out of their love for Him, they often are not like-souled. Instead, they are very different in the soul. These differences in the soul are the primary cause of division.

As far as loving the Lord and enjoying fellowship with Him are concerned, there are no problems. But when we attempt to carry out something for the Lord according to what we have seen in our fellowship with Him in the spirit, we may have problems because we are different in soul from the other saints. In other words, in what we desire to do, we are not like-souled. The source of divisions, therefore, is man's soul.

TWO RESULTS

This difference in soul may have two different kinds of results. First, some may even go so far as to leave the church life and cause yet another division. Second, some may keep the proper standing on the ground of oneness and

stay in the church life, but they may become negative, dissenting, or cold. One who remains in the church life while holding such an attitude may say to himself, “The brothers certainly are strong in their concepts about certain things. I simply am not able to get my idea across to them. Since they are not willing to take my proposal, it is best that I am silent from now on. Instead of being aggressive, I’ll withdraw and become passive. I’ll attend the church meetings, but I’ll let someone else care for the various matters in the church life.” Those who adopt such an attitude may have a good intention. They may be reluctant to argue or cause trouble. For example, an elder in a local church may consider within himself, “My concept is different from that of the other elders. According to my opinion, my way is better than theirs. But, they won’t accept my proposal. Instead of arguing, it is better that I not say anything. Let the brothers do things their way and let them bear the responsibility of taking the church on.” I have seen many cases of this in the church life.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST IN THE BODY

It is very important to realize that if we hold

such an attitude because of differences in the soul, this will cause our experience of Christ to be limited. We shall not be able to experience Him to the full extent. Rather, our experience of Christ will be limited to what we experience in our fellowship with Him in the spirit. We shall be hindered from going further to experience Christ in the Body. Because of the differences of our emotion, understanding, or decision regarding certain matters, we are different in soul. Such differences keep us from the full experience of Christ, the experience of Him in the Body. If we do not experience Christ in the Body, we do not experience Him in full. Only by experiencing Christ in the Body do we experience Him to the fullest extent.

In order to experience Christ in the Body, our experience needs to be corporate. Furthermore, to have a corporate experience of Christ we need to be like-souled with others. It is vitally important that we learn to be like-souled. An elder must learn to be like-souled with other elders, and all the members of a local church need to learn to be like-souled with the other saints.

Throughout the years we have seen a number of saints who have been held back from full

participation in the church life because they were not like-souled. For example, some have not been willing to give themselves to the church service in a positive, aggressive way. They could excuse their lack of involvement by saying they did not want to cause trouble, but wanted to keep the situation calm. However, the true reason for their holding back was that they were not like-souled and were not willing to risk their soul in the church life. We know some brothers who have truly behaved like gentlemen in their involvement with the church. They have been honest and good and have not caused turmoil. Nevertheless, because of their difference of opinion, because of not being like-souled, they eventually forsook the church life. When these brothers gave up the church life, they did not criticize us. They simply went their own way. The underlying reason for leaving the church life was holding on to the differences in their souls.

Other saints who are not like-souled have chosen to remain in the church life. But toward the church life in general and toward the church service in particular, they have a negative attitude. Instead of offending others or causing trouble, they withdraw and become cold. On

the one hand, they do not leave the church life; on the other hand, they do not go on with the church in a strong, positive, aggressive way.

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he had a number of co-workers. Nevertheless, Paul said that, apart from Timothy, he had no one like-souled who would genuinely care for what concerned the believers in Philippi. Paul's situation with respect to the co-workers was quite difficult. On the one hand, there were a number of co-workers. But, when Paul was thinking of sending a brother to learn of the situation among the Philippian saints, he knew that he had only one, Timothy, who was like-souled with him. For this reason, Timothy was the only co-worker Paul could send to Philippi to care for the things concerning the saints.

Any co-worker who could not be sent by Paul with such a concern for the Body of Christ could not experience Christ to the same degree Paul did. Because Timothy was like-souled with Paul, he was in a position to experience Christ to the uttermost in the Body, just as Paul was experiencing Him. But those who were different in soul from Paul could not experience Christ to this high degree. Their experience of Christ was restricted by the differences in soul.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST BY RISKING OUR SOUL

In Philippians Paul speaks not only of being like-souled, but also of risking our soul-life. He says of Epaphroditus that he risked his life, his soul, in order to fill up the lack of the Philippians' service toward Paul. When we speak of Epaphroditus risking his soul, some may say that Paul's meaning here is that Epaphroditus did not love his physical life, but was willing to give it up for the sake of the Body of Christ. It is certainly true to say that Epaphroditus risked his physical life for the sake of the Body. However, this implies that he risked his soul.

MARTYRS FOR THE CHURCH LIFE

Years ago I read an article which said that before a believer can become a martyr, he must first have the attitude of a martyr. According to that article, every martyr has already been equipped with a certain attitude. Then when the time comes to be martyred, such a person can actually become a martyr by laying down his physical life. This principle applies to risking our soul in the church life. If we do not have the heart to sacrifice our mind, emotion, and will

for the sake of the Body of Christ, we shall not be able to sacrifice our physical life in martyrdom. In order for Epaphroditus to risk his physical life, he first had to be willing to risk his soul.

In a very real sense, we in the church life need to be martyrs for the Body of Christ and for all the saints. If we desire to be one with the Lord for the church life, we must be willing to sacrifice our mind, feeling, and intention. This is to risk our soul. In order to experience Christ to the uttermost, we need not only to be like-souled, but also to risk our soul by risking our mind, emotion, and will.

In [Philippians 2:30](#) Paul said to the Philippians that Epaphroditus risked his life that “he might fill up your lack of service toward me.” Epaphroditus risked his soul in order to fill up what was lacking on the part of the Philippian believers toward Paul. This indicates that if we do not risk our soul, we shall not be able to fill up any lack there may be in the Body of Christ. Filling a lack in the Body affords us a splendid opportunity to experience Christ. We need to experience Christ to such an extent that we are able to fill up what is lacking in the Body. If we would experience Christ to this degree, we must

risk our soul-life by sacrificing our emotion with its desires, our will with its intentions, and our mind with its opinions. Whenever we sacrifice our soul for the sake of the Body, we have an opportunity to experience Christ in the Body. This is to experience Christ to the full extent.

If we daily risk our soul in the church life, we shall be ready for martyrdom should this ever be required of us. Those who risk their soul for the Body of Christ are able to lay down their physical life for the Lord. Furthermore, if we risk our soul, we shall find it easy to be like-souled with other believers.

THE LIMITATIONS DUE TO NOT BEING LIKE-SOULED

During the years I was with Brother Nee in China, I came to realize that it was not easy for him to carry out what he had seen in fellowship with the Lord concerning His move on the earth for His Body. The reason for the difficulty was that some of the co-workers were not like-souled with Brother Nee. Certain very crucial things concerning the church life could not be fulfilled in a practical way because these co-workers were not like-souled.

One clear illustration of this shortage involves the case of a brilliant young man who was about to leave China to study in the United States. This young man had just been saved and wanted to be baptized. Convinced that it was both right and necessary to baptize the young man, Brother Nee thought that the church should baptize him before he left China. However, a co-worker in that locality held an opinion to the contrary. This co-worker thought that because the young man had only recently believed in Christ, it was not safe to baptize him. When Brother Nee pointed out that the young man was about to leave for the United States and that they were not assured of another opportunity to baptize him, this co-worker still refused. From different angles Brother Nee tried to persuade him to change his mind. Eventually Brother Nee even said that he was willing to baptize the young man and bear the full responsibility of this action before the Lord. But because that co-worker still would not agree, Brother Nee was not able to do anything.

This case illustrates the differences in soul that existed between some of the co-workers and Brother Nee. At the time, I did not realize that the problem was due to the fact that they were

not like-souled with him. But as I look back on the situation in the light of Paul's word in Philippians, I see clearly what the problem was. Some of those dear co-workers were limited in their experience of Christ. They did not go on to experience Christ to the uttermost in the Body.

OUR NEED TO BE LIKE-SOULED AND TO RISK OUR SOUL

Paul's word about being like-souled is a warning to us. If we are not like-souled with others, we shall not have the full enjoyment of Christ, even though we stay in the church life. Although we have no problems in our spirit, we may hold on to differences in our soul. According to your impression, the feeling you have in your soul is right. However, because you hold on to your differences, your experience of Christ is limited. Thus, it is crucial for us all to learn that in the church life we need to be like-souled. Do not allow the differences in your soul to hold you back from experiencing Christ in His Body. May we all learn to sacrifice our soul, to risk our mind, emotion, and will. Then we shall become like-souled with others in the Body of Christ. If this is our condition, how much we shall experience Christ and enjoy Him in the Body! In order to

experience Christ to the full extent in the Body, we need to be like-souled and we need to risk our soul.

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